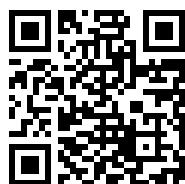


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# ISLANDICA

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VOLUME XVI  
EGGERT ÓLAFSSON  
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HALLDÓR HERMANNSSON

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1925



EXTRACTS FROM THE WILL OF THE LATE  
WILLARD FISKE

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—“I give and bequeath to the Cornell University at Ithaca, New York, all my books relating to Iceland and the old Scandinavian literature and history. . . .”

—“I give and bequeath to the said Cornell University . . . the sum of Five Thousand (5000) Dollars, to have and to hold for ever, in trust, nevertheless, to receive the income thereof, and to use and expend the said income for the purposes of the publication of an annual volume relating to Iceland and the said Icelandic Collection in the library of the said University.”

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1925

# EGGERT ÓLAFSSON

A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

BY

HALLDÓR HERMANNSSON

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1925

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## I.

To people of other lands Iceland has an uninviting name which seems to find confirmation by a look at the map. However, on closer examination it will be found that both name and latitude are somewhat misleading as to the conditions prevalent there. The name is due to an accident which befell a disgruntled explorer, and although no one would deny the existence of ice there both on land and sea, and plenty of it, it is a misnomer because the polar ice and the glaciers are not the only prominent features of the country. They are impressive, to be sure, and will long be remembered by one who has once seen them, but the name leaves out the blue mountains and the green hills and valleys which also will linger in the memory of the traveller, not to speak of the numerous volcanoes which represent the very element opposed to ice. And the temperature belies the latitude; it is moderated by a warm sea current which makes the climate wet and changeable rather than icy cold. But if thus the name and the location are not thoroughly to be trusted, they nevertheless give indications which are significant. Strong hands are required here to grapple with nature and make her yield sustenance to men, and only by hard struggle have they managed to live there for ten centuries. There has been a bitter fight with frost, fire and other calamities which nature has placed in the path of men, yet in the long run they were hardly the most disastrous things for the people. Foreign intervention and mis-government probably weigh heavier in the scale. The former evils certainly were of frequent occurrence, but, in their most severe forms, they were transitory, and the people recovered often surprisingly quickly from them. The latter, on the other hand, were continuous for several centuries and grew in severity as time went on, so that the limit of the nation's endurance had virtually been reached about the middle of the eighteenth century, the period in which the subject of this essay lived. A brief glance at the preceding five centuries is necessary here in order to understand his life and appreciate his work.

It has frequently been maintained that the submission of the Icelanders to the king of Norway in the latter half of the thirteenth century was the only way out of the civil strife which had raged there for several decades, because peaceful conditions could only be established by the royal power which had sufficient authority and strength to curb the activities of the warring chieftains and make them respect the law. But the king himself was largely responsible for the civil war; he stopped at nothing to foment trouble and incite the ambitions of the chieftains with the view of bringing about finally the submission of the people. It was the unfortunate desire of the Norwegian kings to rule over Iceland which led to the turning point in Icelandic history—the people becoming subjects of a foreign king.

The compact which the Icelanders entered into with the king as a guaranty of their liberty was no sooner made than the king attempted to circumvent its clauses in order to change the laws to his advantage and introduce new taxes. In the beginning the Icelanders were on guard against such encroachments, but as time went on, the king, having the backing of the Norwegian people, managed to get his wishes in various ways. One of the provisions in the compact was that the king should see to it that at least six ships should sail annually from Norway to Iceland. Although he did not always fulfil this provision, he found it extremely convenient, by an arbitrary interpretation of it, as giving him a kind of monopoly of the Icelandic trade, or the power to grant this monopoly to certain of his Norwegian subjects; thus much of the profit of the trade found its way to foreigners who cared little for supplying the Icelanders with necessary imports, but were especially anxious to export Icelandic goods for which there was a good market. At the same time English traders and Hanseatic merchants were forbidden to carry on trade with Iceland, a prohibition which, however, was difficult to enforce, since they, notwithstanding rather frequent acts of violence, offered better terms than the Norwegians. The bishops of Skálholt and Hólar were for the most part of foreign origin and as a rule their aim was to enrich the church as well as themselves, so at the time of the Reformation a large portion of the land belonged to religious institutions, while the crown down to that time had acquired very little landed property.

A great change in this last respect took place in the sixteenth

century. The Scandinavian kings were ardent supporters of the Lutheran Reformation as it gave them a good chance to replenish their empty treasuries through seizing the property of the ecclesiastical institutions. This the Danish king did as thoroughly in Iceland as could be done, appropriating all the cloisters with their property, and leaving only so much of the property of the sees as was necessary for the support of the two Lutheran bishops, and out of their income they were expected even to defray most of the expenses of maintaining a Latin school at each see. The king's satellites also managed to get some part of the spoils. The conditions of the tenants of the crown lands became much worse than they had been before.<sup>1</sup> Nor was this all. The old taxes were gradually increased and new ones were introduced, so that there finally existed scarcely any source of income which was not subject to taxation. Hardly a penny of all this was used for the benefit of the people; nothing was done by the government to improve their condition, nothing for improvements of the means of communication; it seems never to have occurred to the rulers to do anything to increase the taxpaying ability of the nation; the only thought was to squeeze annually as much out of the pockets of the king's Icelandic subjects as possible with as little cost to the government as might be.<sup>2</sup> But most harmful were the restrictions of trade. The Danish kings were determined to develop the seafaring and commerce of the Danish towns, and Iceland was considered a legitimate object for that purpose. Hence the government did everything to prevent the Icelanders from trading with other nations than the Danes, so that virtually a monopoly existed already in the latter half of the sixteenth century,<sup>3</sup> whereupon it was formally established in a more stringent form by a royal edict of 1602, and that state of affairs existed until 1787,<sup>4</sup> while freedom of trade with all nations was not permitted until 1855. Much has been said and written about the evil effects of this monopoly, and they can hardly be exaggerated, because not only

<sup>1</sup> Páll E. Ólason, *Menn og menntir síðaskipta-aldarinnar á Íslandi*. III. Reykjavík, 1924, p. 22.

<sup>2</sup> The best account of the taxes and the king's income from Iceland is to be found in Páll E. Ólason, *op. cit.* pp. 5-203.

<sup>3</sup> Páll E. Ólason, *op. cit.* III. p. 126.

<sup>4</sup> For the history of the trade monopoly, see Jón J. Aðils, *Einokunarverzun Dana á Íslandi*. Reykjavík, 1919.

did it impoverish the people while it enriched unscrupulous foreign merchants, but it practically made impossible all initiative and effort on the part of the population to improve their condition, and thus made them indolent, helpless and hopeless.

The establishment of the absolute monarchy in 1660 made comparatively little changes in the policy of the government towards Iceland. To be sure it did away with the legislative function of the Althing, but that had already become shadowy; there were some changes made in the administration whose highest officials were invariably foreigners, many of whom visited the country only at intervals. More severe punishments were introduced especially for violations of the trade monopoly. About 1700 a petition was sent by the Althing to the monarch asking for certain reforms. This led to the sending of a commission to Iceland which was to investigate the conditions there and to make suggestions as to remedies. The members of the commission, Árni Magnússon and Páll Vídalín, traversed the country for ten years (1702-12) and compiled a descriptive list of all the farms, a most important work,<sup>1</sup> but otherwise their labors resulted in no reforms to speak of. The trade monopoly became more intolerable than ever, and the whole material condition of the people was wretched. No wonder that they had lost or were losing confidence in their country and themselves.

Nor were the intellectual and ecclesiastical conditions much better. The submission of the Icelandic nation to a foreign ruler coincides with the end of the original prose literature. Sturla Thórdarson, the last historian of Old Iceland, was the recorder of the civil war in his country and the biographer of the Norwegian king to whom the Icelanders first swore allegiance, and of his successor. Interest in literary matters continued, however, unabated, and much poetry was written on the same or similar lines as of old, the ancient poetical traditions and rules being retained, although the subjects were more of a religious character than before. And so it remained throughout Catholic times. In this the Reformation brought about changes. It initiated a revival of Icelandic prose through the translation of the Holy Scriptures, but the poetry became little but clumsy renderings of foreign hymns and other religious poems, and it

<sup>1</sup> This is now in process of publication by the Society of Icelandic Letters in Copenhagen: *Jarðabók Árna Magnússonar og Páls Vídalíns.* 1912ff.

was not until the middle of the seventeenth century that this religious poetry reached a higher stage. Many of the leaders of the Lutheran church displayed a distinct hostility towards secular poetry and tried to suppress it, fortunately without success, so it continued to flourish and circulate among the people by mouth or by writing, because nothing of this kind was disseminated through printing. As ill luck would have it, the only press in the country was under episcopal control; bigoted and narrowminded bishops poured forth devotional works, hymns and other sacred poetry, being more bent upon saving souls for the next world than making life durable in this. Lutheranism soon became rigid orthodoxy of a particularly dark hue which led to the witchcraft persecutions in the seventeenth century and other superstitions, the embers of which continued to glow, although many of their worst features had disappeared or were on the wane in the following century. But, as stated, the secular literature was almost exclusively circulated in manuscripts, hence we find at that time great activity in copying old and new writings of this character. Alas, even these the people were not allowed to enjoy and keep to themselves!

In the Scandinavian North the early Renaissance movement spent itself in a religious reform. Hence we find no traces of it in Iceland, while the late Renaissance is noticeable there in a reawakened interest among the Icelanders in the history and early literature of their country. Their brethren in the other Scandinavian countries soon discovered that Iceland was a store house of ancient traditions and literary remains, and they became very eager to secure these. The Danish government first issued orders that the old manuscripts be sent to Copenhagen, but to this there was little response at first, although codices were sometimes sent by Icelanders as presents to their friends or men in high positions in Denmark. Before long the Swedish government was also in the field, dispatching its agents, as a rule native Icelanders, thither in order to buy manuscripts which are now in Stockholm and Upsala, and finally came Árni Magnússon, a genius of a collector, and made practically a clean sweep of what was left.<sup>1</sup> All this he brought with him to Copenhagen

<sup>1</sup> For an account of the collecting of the manuscripts, see especially Kr. Kaalund's introductions to his *Katalog over den Arnamagnæanske Haandskriftsamling*, København 1888-94, and his *Katalog over de oldnorsk-islandske*

and bequeathed it to the University there, thus founding the famous collection that bears his name. It is idle to speculate on whether this collecting and wholesale exportation saved the manuscripts from destruction—an argument often advanced. I am not concerned here with that hypothetical question, but am merely stating the fact that Iceland was deprived of them, so that people had no opportunity to make use of them there. What this really meant may be best illustrated by a comparison. Iceland had no monumental buildings of the past nor works of art. The memory of her men and her history was preserved on parchment and paper; her monuments were literary; of these she had now been deprived, and therefore in the condition that Italy would be if she had been shorn of her monuments, sculptures, paintings, and manuscripts of the past.

I have mentioned above the two Latin schools which had been established in Iceland. These were of the most primitive kind, receiving scant financial support, and the education which the students received there was one-sided and superficial. Whatever benefit they derived from attending them was more the result of their own independent industry and intellectual curiosity than of the teaching of the often insufficiently trained, overworked, and underpaid teachers, usually two in number at each school. To improve upon this the government granted a stipend to a certain number of graduates from these schools while studying at the University of Copenhagen. This was indeed a great privilege, but in those early days comparatively few students were able to avail themselves of it.

Because Iceland was governed from Copenhagen, and since the highest representatives of the government seldom stayed for any length of time in the country, no capital city came into existence there. Nor were there any permanent seats for any of the secular officials except the governor-general whose residence was Bessastaðir. Furthermore, the commercial policy of the government prevented the development even of a trading town. The merchants, being foreigners, traded only during the summer, closed up their stores in the autumn, and sailed away with their profits, to reappear in the spring. This absence of towns made

*Haandskrifter i det store kongelige Bibliotek*, etc. København 1900; also W. Gödel, *Fornnorsk-isländsk litteratur i Sverige*. I. Stockholm 1897.—To this disappearance of MSS. from the country Eggert Ólafsson refers in one of his poems, see *Kvæði*, p. 125, st. 17; p. 127, st. 37.

difficult any material or intellectual co-operation by the natives as well as any concerted political action.

Thus the Icelanders had lived for many centuries under a government which took much but gave very little. They were themselves not altogether without blame for the condition of their country, because they had often quarreled among themselves and thus strengthened the hands of the government, nor had their leaders always set public above private interests, as has happened and will happen in all ages and all countries. But the nation had reached a stage where its very existence hung in the balance, and with this in mind we must view the life of Eggert Ólafsson.

## II.

Eggert Ólafsson was born in Svefneyjar in Breiðafjord, Dec. 1, 1726.<sup>1</sup> His father was Ólafur Gunnlaugsson, a well-to-do farmer and in many respects a remarkable man; he wrote some poetry, painted a little, and made a large collection of proverbs;<sup>2</sup> his ancestors were farmers. Eggert's mother was Ragnheiður Sigurðsdóttir, whose family on her mother's side goes back to a Norwegian chieftain of the ninth century.<sup>3</sup> Her father was of the renowned Svalbarð family<sup>4</sup> which counted among its members some of the most prominent men in the country during the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries. She had two brothers: Sigurður Sigurðsson, a clergyman, and Guðmundur Sigurðsson, prefect of Snæfellsnessýsla. Eggert's first teacher was his uncle, the clergyman, but at twelve years of age he went to live with his other uncle at Ingjaldshóll, who henceforth defrayed all the expenses of his education. He was prepared for the Latin school

<sup>1</sup> For the life and works of Eggert, see especially Björn Halldórsson, *Æfe Eggerts Ólafssonar*, etc. Hrapsey 1784. 8°, pp. 64; Porv. Thoroddsen, *Landfræðissaga Íslands* III. 1902, pp. 17-56; J. C. Poestion, *Isländische Dichter der Neuzeit*, 1897, pp. 246-64; Jón Jónsson (Aðils), *Dagrenning*, 1910, pp. 3-38; Jón Helgason, *Fra Íslands Dæmringstid*, 1918, pp. 21-36; Vilhj. P. Gíslason, *Íslensk endurreisn*, 1923, passim; Bjarni Jónsson, *Um Eggert Ólafsson*. Reykjavík, 1892. 8°, pp. 56; Guðm. G. Bárðarson, in *Lögrjetta* XII. No. 54; Kr. Kaalund, in *Dansk biografisk Lexikon*, XII. pp. 381-84. A few letters from Eggert are printed in *Andvari* I. pp. 172-93, II. pp. 135-42, III. pp. 146-52.

<sup>2</sup> Porv. Thoroddsen, *Landfræði. Ísl.* II. pp. 301-02.

<sup>3</sup> See Appendix I. at the end of this volume.

<sup>4</sup> See Appendix II.

by a neighboring clergyman, Síra Thorleifur Magnússon, and entered the Skálholt School in 1741. There he remained five winters, spending his summer vacations with his uncle at Ingjaldshóll. He graduated in 1746, and in the same year went to Copenhagen, where he was matriculated at the University, choosing as his private "præceptor," or adviser, Joachim Fredrick Ramus, professor of mathematics, who evidently had considerable influence upon the young student and encouraged him in his work.<sup>1</sup> In 1748 he passed the prescribed examination in philosophy and obtained a bachelor's degree, but as to what were his special studies those two years we have no information.

In the following year he published the first part of his dissertation entitled *Enarrationes historicae de Islandiae natura et constitutione* (see p. 9) in the preface to which he says, that it was undertaken at the suggestion of a gentleman in Iceland to whom he was under obligations, which probably refers to his uncle Guðmundur.<sup>2</sup> In an introductory chapter he explains the causes and actions of subterranean fire, and comes to the conclusion that Iceland is mostly formed by volcanic forces; small islands had gradually been formed in the sea by volcanic eruptions, and by subsequent ones those had been made larger and higher and finally united so that they took the shape which the country now has. Thereupon follow five chapters dealing with various natural phenomena in Iceland, constituting a partial physical geography of the country; these were compiled mostly from manuscripts in the Arna-Magnæan Collection and printed sources, and the whole makes a creditable work. The second part of the dissertation was never published, and it may be doubted if it was ever completed.<sup>3</sup>

In the same year the young author took the opportunity to reveal to the public his poetic talent. The Oldenburg dynasty had been for three hundred years on the Danish throne, and that called for some celebration. Eggert issued the first of his poetical eulogies of the royal family under the title *Islandia ex parte facta ad jubilæum*, etc.<sup>4</sup> The poem is equally archaic in

<sup>1</sup> See *Andvari* II. p. 146.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Andvari* II. p. 146ff.

<sup>3</sup> Finnur Magnússon states that the MS. of vol. ii existed, cf. P. Thoroddsen, *Lfrss. Isl.* III. p. 20.

<sup>4</sup> The full title is: *Islandia ex parte facta ad jubilæum Daniae & Norvegiae quod in memoriam regiminis stemmatis Oldenburgici C. C. C. jam annum, a deo*

ENARR. HISTORICÆ  
 DE  
**ISLANDIÆ NATURA  
 ET CONSTITUTIONE  
 FORMATÆ & TRANSFORMATÆ  
 PER ERUPTIONES IGNIS**

*Ex*  
 Antiquissimis Islandorum, Manuscriptis Hi-  
 storiis, Annalibus, Relationibus, nec-  
 non observationibus

*Conscriptæ*  
**PARTICULA PRIMA**

*DE*  
**ISLANDIA, ANTEQVAM COE-  
 PTÀ EST HABITARI**

*Qvam*  
**Pro STIPENDIO VICTUS REGIO  
 CONSENSU AMPLISSIMI SENATUS  
 ACADEMICI**

*Publico Opponentium Examini*  
*Subjicit*

**EGERHARDUS OLAVIUS ISLAND.**  
 RESPONDENTE

**ILLOGO SIGURDI FILIO.**

*S. Sti. Ministerii Candidato.*

**in AUDITORIO COLLEGII REGII.**

*Die 24. Iec. h. 9. A. M. Anno M. DCC. XLIX.*

 HAFNIAE,

*Typis & Impensis Directoris S. R. M. & Universitatis Typogr.  
 JOH. GEORG. HÖPFFNERI.*

*TITLE-PAGE OF THE Enarrationes historicæ.*

expressions, form, and spelling, so the Latin translation accompanying it must have been a real help to the reader. In this pamphlet the author calls himself student of philosophy and northern antiquities.

During the winter 1749–50 we first hear of Eggert collaborating with Bjarni Pálsson, who was seven years his senior, was a graduate of the Hólar Latin School, and who had taken a medical degree in 1748.<sup>1</sup> These two were engaged by Professor Möllmann to catalogue books in the University Library, and discharged this task so well that in the spring they were given a stipend of the Arna-Magnæan Legacy to make a trip to Iceland with the purpose of collecting old books and natural objects, such as plants, animals, and minerals. They repaired to Iceland the same year and travelled principally through the southwestern districts of the country, ascended the volcano Hekla, which no one had done before, and returned to Copenhagen in the autumn. The results of the trip were apparently satisfactory to the Copenhagen authorities, and aroused the interest of the Royal Academy of Sciences, which ordered Bjarni to investigate earlier expeditions to Iceland and make a report on them. Eggert continued his geological and antiquarian studies, and published, in 1751, a disquisition, *De ortu et progressu superstitionis circa ignem Islandæ subterraneum*, etc., dealing with Icelandic superstitions about subterranean fire, in which he tries to show the connection between volcanic activities and the popular belief in supernatural beings; it is principally based upon the *Speculum regale* and other old writings.<sup>2</sup>

*optimo maximo servati indexit Fridericus quintus, Daniae, Norvegiae, Vandalarum Gothorumque, dux Slesvici, Holsatiae, Stormaricæ et Dismaricæ, Oldenburgi ac Delmenhorstæ comes. A. D. XXVIII. Octobr. MDCCXLIX. Havniæ, Officina Sacr. Reg. Maj. Aulica apud E. H. Berlingium. 4° ff. (6).—On p. 3 as continuation of the title: Qvam rhythmo, antiquissima regnorum septentrionalium lingua composito, et juxta veterum scaldorum, sive poetarum regiorum methodum, ut, scripturae genus, metrum, voces et logvendi modos, instituto alloquitur Egerhardus Olavius Isl. nat. philos. et antiquitatum bor. studiosus. Accedit latina singulorum metrorum explicatio, proxime, qvoad prisci idiomatis genius pati potuit proposita.—The Icelandic text is printed in *Kvæði*, pp. 74–77.*

<sup>1</sup> For the life of Bjarni, see Sveinn Pálsson, *Efisaga Bjarna Pálssonar*. *Leirárgörðum* 1800, 8°;—Porv. Thoroddsen, *Landfræðissaga Íslands* III. p. 20ff.; Jónas Jónasson, in *Tímarit hins ísl. Bókmenafélags* XI. 1890, p. 177ff.

<sup>2</sup> For the full title, see *Icel. Cat.* p. 438. As indicated in the title it is *præmittenda* to vol. ii of *Enarrationes* which never was published. The number of pages in a complete copy is 28, perhaps pp. 13–28 were published separately as part ii.

Upon the ascension of Fredrick the Fifth to the Danish throne in 1746 a reform government was soon established which had the best intentions to ameliorate the conditions of the Icelanders, but ignorance about the country made it difficult to take any definite steps in that direction. It was therefore necessary to obtain first hand information about the physical geography of the country, its resources, and the life and customs of the inhabitants. Niels Horrebow had been sent thither by the government in 1749, chiefly, however, to make scientific observations, but on the recommendation of the Academy of Sciences he was recalled and the king issued a letter April 23, 1751,<sup>1</sup> directing that Eggert and Bjarni should be sent to Iceland and in the following years traverse the whole country in accordance with instructions given to them by the Academy. They were to keep the stipend from the Arna-Magnæan Legacy, and in addition to this receive 100 Rigsdaler from the royal treasury, a sum which later on was doubled. It proved difficult to start the expedition the following summer, so by a rescript of May 14, 1751,<sup>2</sup> it was arranged that they should spend the next winter in Copenhagen in preparation, which accordingly they did.

In the spring of 1752 the two left Copenhagen, and reached Iceland in July, not entering upon their overland journey until August. That summer they visited some of the northern districts. The next year (1753) they ascended Geitlandsjökull and travelled through the western and northwestern districts. In the summer of 1754 they scaled Snæfellsjökull, which never had been done before, and visited those of the western districts where they had not been the preceding year. In 1755 they went over the Reykjanes peninsula, making a careful investigation of sulphur mines there, whereupon they traversed again some of the western and northwestern districts. The following year (1756) they turned their attention to the southeastern parts of the country, being particularly anxious to visit the crater Katla where a great eruption had taken place the preceding October. They tried to find the crater, but meeting with bad weather they had to turn back without accomplishing this, and continued their journey eastwards. In 1757 they first visited Eyjafjord in the North, where they parted company, Eggert

<sup>1</sup> *Lovsamlung for Island* III. pp. 70-72.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 89-90.

going west while Bjarni went alone through the northwestern and eastern districts, not previously visited by them, and made a survey of the sulphur mines around Mývatn. Thus their travels came to an end, both leaving in the autumn of that year for Copenhagen. Most of their winters they had spent at Viðey with Skúli Magnússon, the energetic country treasurer (*landfógeti*). From time to time they had sent reports of their travels and observations, and their collections to the Academy, which were well received.

The following two years Eggert and Bjarni spent in Copenhagen working on the material they had collected, and preparing an account of their travels which was to be printed, and besides pursued studies in the University. In 1760 Bjarni was appointed surgeon-general of Iceland, an office which had just been established. Consequently he left Copenhagen to take up his duties in Iceland. These left him no time for further work on their travels, which henceforth Eggert had to continue alone. But the climate of Copenhagen was not agreeable to him, and he asked to be permitted to return to Iceland and work there on the report. This the government granted, so he also left for Iceland in the spring of 1760. He took up his residence at Sauðlauksdal with Síra Björn Halldórsson, his brother-in-law. He was glad to see his native land again,<sup>1</sup> and soon regained his health. He had intended at first only to stay there one winter, but he remained for four years.

The Sauðlauksdal parsonage was a unique place in Iceland in those days, as will be mentioned below, and Eggert thoroughly enjoyed his stay there, the two brothers-in-law having many things in common, though in many others they were different, so that their daily intercourse doubtless benefitted both. The work on the expedition advanced slowly which apparently caused some dissatisfaction and criticism in Copenhagen circles. Whether this was due to enmity or envy on the part of his own countrymen in the Danish capital, as he plainly intimates,<sup>2</sup> is difficult to ascertain. In any case he was recalled to Copenhagen to give an account of his work, and he arrived there in the autumn of 1764. He satisfied his superiors fully as to the progress of the

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Andvari* II. p. 172.

<sup>2</sup> See *Kvaði*, pp. 192-93. Possibly the poem *Öfundarelti* was written at the same time (*Kvaði*, pp. 115-16).

work, and he remained in Copenhagen for the next two years to finish it.

About that time there was a considerable number of Icelandic students living in Copenhagen and, as often has been the case, they were divided into two factions opposed to one another. One of these had established an organization, called *Sakir*, presumably about the year 1756, partly as it seems for social purposes, partly with the view of securing united action of the Icelandic students in any quarrels which might arise between them and Danish students, and a clash between the two is said to have been the immediate cause of the organization, but its early history is obscure because there are no reliable sources extant concerning it older than 1760. But if it was founded in the year 1756 Eggert could not have been directly connected with its beginning, as he was at that time in Iceland, but his brothers were doubtless among the founders of the *Sakir*. In the two years he spent in Copenhagen after finishing his travels feeling probably ran rather high among the students, and it is not unlikely that this was one of the causes why Eggert wished to go to Iceland in 1760.<sup>1</sup> When he returned in 1764 the bickerings between the factions were still going on, although many students took no part in them. The two opposing groups were called the Bishop's Sons' Party (*Biskupssonaflokkur*) and the Farmers' Sons' Party (*Bændasonaflokkur*). The former consisted chiefly of sons of Icelandic officials and its leader was Hannes Finnsson, son of the bishop of Skálholt, hence the name. The latter group was led by Eggert or probably rather by his brothers. The names of the parties indicate a certain social distinction which, however, was not of any particular consequence. More important was the difference of opinion on the affairs of their native land. Both unquestionably were good patriots according to the standard of the time, but they disagreed as to the methods to be used in promoting the welfare of their country. The party of the farmers' sons were great admirers of the ancient history of the people, wishing to imitate their remote ancestors in their actions, speaking, and writing; they supposed by so doing they could best preserve the national heritage and at the same time lift the people up from the lethargy into which they had fallen, and arouse them to action; it was, in other words, a strongly

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Andvari* II. p. 173.

nationalistic movement, which aimed at cultivating to the utmost all national customs and traditions, while counteracting foreign influences. The bishop's sons were equally anxious about the welfare of their land, but they believed that this would be best advanced by following the examples of other nations and benefitting by their experience, without, however, disregarding the traditions of the forefathers. They may thus be styled opportunists or moderates, while the others were extremists. There are certain periods when men of extreme and uncompromising views are required, not because it is desirable that they should win, but in order to arouse opposition and thus awaken the people, and this was one of those periods. Eggert was such an extremist, as can be seen from the language and spelling of the first two pamphlets which he published in Icelandic, but he gradually tempered his views, and during his last stay in Copenhagen he tried to effect a reconciliation between the factions, but in this he was not successful, which could hardly be expected since he had been so long in the front line and the opposition were less willing to yield to him than to some other, besides, it is rumored that a personal affair between him and Hannes was the underlying cause of the bitterness between the leaders.<sup>1</sup> When they left the stage the factions soon disappeared.

In January 1766 King Fredrick V died and Eggert wrote a poem for the occasion, mourning the dead monarch and greeting his successor, which was printed the same year in Copenhagen.<sup>2</sup> His labors on the travels were seemingly now finished, and in the summer of 1766 he returned to Iceland and again settled at Sauðlauksdal. He received a pension from the government until he could be appointed to some salaried position. In the following year he was made vice-lawman of the southern and eastern provinces, but no salary was attached to this position; he would, however, succeed to the lawmanship as soon as this became vacant. The appointment was not so unexpected as he and his biographer say.<sup>3</sup> He had actually applied for the position.<sup>4</sup> In another respect it might appear rather surprising.

<sup>1</sup> For this whole matter, see Jón Porkelsson's introduction to *Saga Jóns Espólins*, 1895, pp. v-xxxiii.—J. Espólín, *Íslands árbakur* X. p. 78.

<sup>2</sup> *Fridreks-Draapa*; for a full title, see *Icel. Cat.* p. 428; printed in *Kvæði*, pp. 103-07.

<sup>3</sup> *Andvari* I. p. 192; Björn Halldórsson, *Æfi*, p. 9.

<sup>4</sup> *Skírnir* LXXXV. pp. 372-77 (by Klemens Jónsson).

By the royal ordinance of Feb. 10, 1736, it had been prescribed that only those who had studied law in the University and taken a degree should be appointed to judicial offices, but as a matter of fact this was not rigidly observed in Iceland during the eighteenth century.<sup>1</sup> Nor was Eggert's appointmentun justified. There was at that time much uncertainty as to what laws were in force in Iceland and the government made repeated attempts to have the laws codified, but without success.<sup>2</sup> Although Eggert had not been a student of law in the University, he had studied by himself the ancient laws of the country and there were probably few, if any, of his contemporaries who had so good a knowledge of the subject as he. And from that stand-point the appointment was quite appropriate, but unfortunately it was not to fall to his lot to succeed to the lawmanship.

He became engaged to Ingibjörg Guðmundsdóttir, his cousin, the daughter of Guðmundur Sigurðsson, his fosterfather, who had died in 1753. She was living with one of her relatives, the minister of Reykholt, and at this old home of Snorri Sturlason the wedding took place in the autumn of 1767.<sup>3</sup> In accordance with the wishes of the bridegroom this was a most elaborate affair and was carried out in the manner of aristocratic weddings of mediæval Iceland, upon which Eggert had written a lengthy treatise with the purpose of preserving these customs, and he had written many songs (*minni*) to be sung at the various ceremonies to be observed at such weddings. And there was all the more reason to revive them since the pietistic government of Christian VI had tried to suppress some of the customs which were considered irreverent.<sup>4</sup>

Although Eggert needed no suggestion from outside to advocate the observance of old national customs, it is not unlikely that his interest in this particular field, the marriage ceremonies, may have originally been awakened or stimulated by others. While a student in the University he became an intimate friend of Jón Eiríksson, two years his junior, who although a native of Iceland was a graduate of the Throndhjem Cathedral School; his knowledge or use of Icelandic had become somewhat rusty

<sup>1</sup> Klemens Jónsson, *Lögfræðingatal*, 1910, p. 1f.

<sup>2</sup> Halldór Hermannsson, *Modern Icelandic*, 1919, pp. 15-16.

<sup>3</sup> His love affair is described in the poem *Honestu Venus, eðr Hreinar ástir* (see *Kvaði*, pp. 155-68).

<sup>4</sup> See ordinance of June 3, 1746 (cf. *Tímarit h. fsl. Bókm. fél. XVII*, p. 139).

and this he remedied by intercourse with Icelandic students. Gerhard Schöning, a young Norwegian who at that time had determined to make the writing of Norwegian history his life work, was then living in Copenhagen. For his researches knowledge of Old Norse or Icelandic was essential, and this he acquired doubtless from Jón Eiríksson and his Icelandic friends, possibly Eggert, who then was studying old manuscripts. The first product of Schöning's researches in Old Norse subjects was a dissertation on wedding customs in the ancient North, which was published in January 1750, and dedicated to one of his friends on the latter's wedding day.<sup>1</sup> Now there are two possibilities, either Eggert suggested the subject to Schöning, or vice versa; that there is some connection between Schöning's printed pamphlet and Eggert's elaborate essay on the marriage customs in Iceland seems highly probable. This essay has never been printed, but there are various manuscript copies of it.<sup>2</sup> I mention this as an example of possible influence from outside on some of Eggert's national activities.

But to return to the wedding. We have an interesting account of it by one of the guests, Síra Björn Halldórrsson, the bridegroom's brother-in-law, and a brief summary of it is worth including here.<sup>3</sup>

On Saturday most of the invited guests arrived in Reykholt, the bridegroom and his followers occupying tents which had been erected at some distance from the parsonage. On Sunday morning he rode to church with his attendants, the other guests and church-goers joining them. This was called the bridegroom's ride, and it was arranged so that one man led the procession, others following behind him in pairs, first the attendants, then men of highest rank, then clergymen and other officials, and finally farmers and young men. The bridegroom with his "paranymph" rode in the middle surrounded by his friends and neighbors. They alighted near the church, and were received there by the rural dean and two clergymen, who intoned a

<sup>1</sup> Cf. L. Daae, *Gerhard Schöning*, 1880, p. 16; Francis Bull, *Fra Holberg til Nordal Brun*, 1916, p. 151ff.—The title of Schöning's pamphlet is: *Nogle Anmærkninger over vore gamle nordiske Forfædres Giftermål og Brylluper*.

<sup>2</sup> A pretty full account of its contents is found in an article on the subject by Sæmundur Eyjólfsson, in *Tímarit h. ísl. Bókm. fél.* XVII. 1896, pp. 92–143.—Cf. Eggert's *Kvæði*, pp. 181–87.

<sup>3</sup> Printed in *Fjallkonan* II. 1885, pp. 23–24, 27.

hymn and singing led the procession into the church. Thereupon the ladies were conducted from the parsonage to the church, and matins were sung. After that the regular church service was celebrated and the banns read for the third time. Following the service a banquet was held, where the cup of welcome and other toasts were drunk with appropriate speeches and songs. The toasts were carried to the bride's house where the ladies were dining, with greetings from the men, a speech was delivered and songs sung. The dinner lasted until evening, and when it was finally over a toast of rejoicing was drunk with due ceremonies, the mirth reaching its climax just before the guests separated and went to their respective quarters.

On Monday the wedding took place. The men entered for the first time the bride's house and greeted the ladies who were sitting there on benches. The bridegroom stepped forward and plighted his troth to the bride in accordance with law, whereupon the men withdrew. Then all went to church where the rural dean performed the marriage ceremony. Following it a dinner was served, and this was the first time that men and women dined together. After dinner and vespers the king's toast was drunk.

The following Tuesday was the so-called Farmer's Day (*bóndadagur*). After matins and breakfast the nuptial toast was drunk, at which every guest was obliged to speak (while at the other toasts there was only one speaker). Following the dinner the farmer's toast (*bóndaminni*) was drunk. This was the most original of all the ceremonies at the wedding. All the guests repaired to the church-yard, where Snorri Sturlason and other of the Sturlungs lay buried. A bench was placed along the wall where the most prominent guests could sit, and in front of it was the toastmaster's chair; behind it were standing his assistants, the singers, and an old farmer who was to make the so-called nomination. Two men brought forth the mead-cask, filled with a mixture of mead and ale, a special drink prepared for the occasion with herbs, and quite strong. These men stood beside the toastmaster and filled the cups from the cask. The toastmaster rose, greeted the guests, and delivered a speech, whereupon the old farmer stepped forward, proposed the toast for the young couple, giving the bridegroom the title of farmer (*bóndi*) and the bride that of housewife (*húsfreyja*). Then a

song was sung and all turned towards the young couple and bowed to them. After the singing the bridegroom thanked the company for the toast on his own and his wife's behalf, declaring it to be a great honor to bear such titles. Thereupon the toast was drunk, and others followed until the cask was empty. After supper vespers were held, and the day ended with the drinking of Iceland's toast (*jöðurlandsminni*). It is worth mentioning that this day the bridegroom wore a dress entirely of native material, not only was the cloth domestic but the buttons and other things of that kind were either made of native material or at least were of native workmanship. By this he wished to set an example to others.

The guests numbered about one hundred, and most of them left on Wednesday morning after matins, and after the farewell cup had been drunk; only a few guests stayed over until Thursday or Friday.

Having been married Eggert planned to make his home at Hofstaðir, a large farm on the south side of Snæfellsnes. Big buildings were being erected there to receive him, but unfortunately they could not be completed that autumn, so with his wife he decided to spend the winter at Sauðlauksdal. In May 1768 preparations were made by him to move to his new home, and two open boats were secured for the purpose. On May 30th, which was Sunday, the two boats left Skor, a landing place on the north shore of Breiðafjörd, going directly south towards Snæfellsnes. They were heavily loaded; Eggert and his wife with their servants and a few seamen occupied the larger of the two boats, Eggert himself being at the helm. The weather was quiet at the time of sailing, but there were ominous signs of an approaching change, and some of the seamen advised against going to sea, but Eggert ordered that they should sail. When they were a mile or so away from land, threatening dark clouds which had been seen on the northeast horizon in the morning quickly covered the whole sky and the wind increased to a gale. The smaller ship soon reefed the sails, laid to for a while, and then returned safely to Skor. As to the fate of the other boat there are conflicting accounts. The crew of the small boat maintained that the large boat passed them going southward at great speed, and finally disappeared into the darkness of the storm. Others have it that the crew saw Eggert's boat capsize, and

Eggert and his secretary twice climb out of the water upon the keel, but that the crew did not attempt to save them, which probably under the circumstances would have been impossible considering the fury of the elements.<sup>1</sup> In any case Eggert's boat was never seen again nor anything of its contents, except a shoe which later was cast on shore and was supposed to have belonged to his wife. Eggert's disappearance was so sudden and involved in such uncertainty that people were reluctant to believe that he actually was dead and gone forever. Hence there circulated stories to the effect that he had been saved by a foreign fishing ship, and had gone abroad. But he did not return, and soon no faith was placed in such tales and surmises. Thus he died in the prime of life, and with him perished a great many of his own writings, and valuable collections of various kinds.<sup>2</sup>

### III.

The most important by far of Eggert's writings is the work on his and Bjarni Pálsson's travels. It was compiled from their diaries and other notes, about one half of the material found there being included. He wrote it in Danish and thereafter sent it to his friend Jón Eiríksson who at that time was professor at the Sorö Academy and who was to revise it and correct the style, if need be. But before Jón could finish this he was called to Copenhagen, so the revision was entrusted to Gerhard Schöning, at that time professor of history in Sorö. He made the final preparation of the manuscript for the printer, and wrote the preface. It was published in Sorö at the expense of the Danish Academy of Sciences in 1772, in two stately volumes under the title *Reise igjennem Island* (see p. 20), over eleven hundred pages in quarto, with many illustrations, and a new map of

<sup>1</sup> See especially *Blanda* II. 1921-23, pp. 146-90 (Tvennar heimildir um drukknun Eggerts Ólafssonar) by Árni Porkelsson and Daði Níelsson.

<sup>2</sup> Eggert's mother had died earlier in the same year, but his eighty years old father was living at Sauðlauksdal, and a story is told by his grandson that when the old man heard the news of the drowning he said nothing, but walked out into the field and worked hard there for half a day; when he returned home he was as cheerful as usual (P. Thoroddsen, *Lfss. Isl.* III. p. 41). Another tradition has it that he long hoped for the return of his son (*Blanda* II. p. 189). Ólafur Gunnlaugsson survived his son by eighteen years, and died 1784, ninety-six years old.

Vice-Labmand Eggert Olafssens  
 Land-physici Bjarne Povelsens  
**Reise igennem Island,**  
 foranstaltet  
 af  
**Bidenstabernes Selskab**  
 i Kjøbenhavn,  
 og bestreven af forbemeldte  
**Eggert Olafsen,**  
 med  
 dertil hørende 51 Robberstøffer  
 og  
 et nyt forfærdiget Kart over Island.

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**Første Del.**

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Göteborg, 1772.  
 Trykt hos Jonas Lindgrens Ense.  
 TITLE-PAGE OF THE *Reise* (REDUCED).

Iceland by Jón Eiríksson and Schøning.<sup>1</sup> Two years later it was translated into German,<sup>2</sup> in 1802 a French translation was issued,<sup>3</sup> and in 1805 appeared an epitome in English.<sup>4</sup>

This monumental work is of lasting value and is the first authoritative and comprehensive description of Iceland and its inhabitants. In view of the criticism which sometimes has been made regarding the arrangement of the text,<sup>5</sup> it must be remembered that it is not styled a description of but a journey through Iceland. This has its advantages as well as disadvantages. If one wishes to learn all about a certain district, it will usually be found in one place; if on the other hand a description of a certain thing and its occurrence in the country is looked for, it has to be sought in various places. It would doubtless have been better to work it out so that each subject or all related subjects were treated in one place. All topics concerning the geography and nature of the country, the life of the people, their customs and livelihoods are dealt with there at a length proportionate to their importance. The geography covers, however, almost exclusively the inhabited portions through which the travellers went. Their observations are generally very accurate, while their theories and explanations of natural phenomena are in conformity with the state of science at that time, and therefore often of little consequence now. For instance, geology and cognate sciences were then in a primitive stage; it follows therefore that the classification of glaciers and the ideas expressed there about their origin and development are now looked upon as unscientific, yet much valuable information about them is to be found there. The author divides the mountains into two groups, which he calls

<sup>1</sup> It was issued in 500 copies.

<sup>2</sup> *Reise durch Island.* I.-II. Theil. Kopenhagen u. Leipzig 1774-75.

<sup>4</sup>. Translated by J. M. Geuss.—An abstract appeared in 1779 (see *Icel. Cat.* p. 439).

<sup>3</sup> *Voyage en Islande.* Tome I.-V. Paris 1802. 8°. Translated by Gauthier de Lapeyronie (see *Icel. Cat.* p. 439). The work was very unfavorably reviewed in the *Edinburgh Review* III. 1804, pp. 334-43.

<sup>4</sup> *Travels in Iceland.* London 1805. 8°. (See *Icel. Cat.* p. 439.) According to the title it is translated from the Danish, but in a postscript signed F. W. B., the editor lets the cat out of the bag by stating that the original work was not published until 1802, thus divulging that this is an abstract of the French version, and a poor one at that.

<sup>5</sup> See e.g. W. F. Hooker, *Journal of a tour in Icel.* 1813, I. pp. lxxi-lxxii; and the reviewer in the *Edinb. Review* mentioned above.

regular and irregular; the former corresponds nearly to the mountains of basalt, while the second covers those of tuff and breccia, including also as a rule those of liparite. He does not make a proper distinction between rocks of volcanic and of aqueous origin, nor between rocks and minerals, but this fault is more due to his time than to himself. In the *surtarbrand* he observed impressions of the leaves of trees, and thus was the first to discover its origin, but the different levels of the layers somewhat puzzled him, yet he explained that by great upheavals which had taken place in earlier periods. Besides the glaciers particular attention is paid to all volcanic phenomena, and we find there long descriptions of volcanoes, hot and tepid springs, sulphur mines, and the like. The mineral springs called *ölkeldur* he dwells on at length, and thinks that they might be profitably used. The vegetation he investigated with great care and made a large collection of plants; he was particularly interested in the economic, nutritive, and medical values of the native flora, an interest which was characteristic of the age. The fauna of land and sea is likewise treated at length, with particular attention to ornithology.<sup>1</sup> All branches of natural science he tried to cover, and thus he laid the foundations of that science in Iceland. Eggert had not used all his materials in this work; he intended to write monographs on various subjects of natural history, such as volcanoes, insects, and birds; drafts of some of those still exist in manuscript, but most of them were lost with him.

The life of the people fills no less space than the nature of the country. There is hardly a side of it which is not described or commented upon; we are told about the looks of the inhabitants of the various districts, their peculiarities, their language, dress, occupation, intellectual interests, games, amusement, and so on. Thus the book is an invaluable source for the history of civilization.<sup>2</sup> The illustrations, fifty-one in number, are partly by Eggert, partly by others; most of them are well and carefully done.

Of the two travellers' personal experiences their climbing of some

<sup>1</sup> Concerning this, see P. Thoroddsen, *Landfrss. Isl.* III. pp. 45-56.

<sup>2</sup> There is a reference in one place to New England. Complaining of the rising wages in Iceland the author says that it ultimately may result in such conditions as are said to prevail in the English colonies in America, where householders can not afford to keep servants on account of the high wages (*Rejse*, p. 38).

high mountains is most fully described. This was novel in Iceland as elsewhere at that time. People felt some superstitious fear of the mountains, believing that unknown dangers were lurking there and supernatural beings to be met with. Our travellers showed that this superstition was baseless, and it is one of the noteworthy things they accomplished, although their mountaineering exploits were not of a dangerous and difficult kind, measured by the standard of the present day mountain climber.

The volcano Hekla was the first mountain to be scaled, on June 19, 1750. Arriving at Selsund, one of the farms nearest the mountain, they engaged the farmer as their guide. Although knowing well the country around, he had never been farther than the base of the mountain, as the people looked upon it as reckless to make any attempt to investigate the mountain itself, and furthermore maintained that it would be impossible to ascend it because of terrible sulphur-reeking mud pools, hot springs, and a large crater which continually emitted fire and smoke. Moreover it was rumored that birds, in the shape of ravens, with sharp beaks of iron, would give an exceedingly unpleasant reception to any one who ventured up there. The farmer of Selsund, however, admitted that he had never noticed any of these things. They approached the mountain from the west, passing over an area of utter desolation, often difficult to traverse because of the unevenness of the lava, until they reached a ridge consisting of large congealed flagstones which surrounded the mountain like a wall, forty to seventy feet high, and which made it impossible to take the ponies any farther. Here also the guide excused himself from accompanying them higher up on account of a severe headache, the real reason, as may be presumed, being his fear of ascending the dreadful mountain. Therefore they proceeded without him, and found the ascent comparatively easy, although great caution was necessary because the flagstones were covered with moss and consequently very slippery, while between them were deep holes. The weather was clear and quite cold as they approached the summit; this was covered with newly fallen snow which they had to wade through up to their knees; but there was no glacier there and old snow was found only in holes and fissures. They reached the top at 12 o'clock midnight. It was light as day, a perfect silence prevailed, but neither boiling springs, fire, smoke, nor

ravens were to be seen. The view was sweeping and beautiful.<sup>1</sup> The descent was quicker and easier, and when they rejoined their guide at the foot of the mountain, he had entirely recovered from his indisposition and expressed his surprise at their safe return.<sup>2</sup>

The next mountain to be ascended was Geitlandsjökull. Their instructions from the Royal Academy laid stress upon the gathering of information concerning glaciers and glacial phenomena, and they selected this glacier as the first object of investigation. Connected with it was a popular legend, first mentioned in the saga of Grettir, who is said to have associated with mountain folk living in a fertile valley, called Thórisdal, in the midst of the glacier,<sup>3</sup> but Eggert characteristically states that their aim was not so much to discover a new region, or unknown inhabitants, which nature seemed to make impossible, as to observe carefully a glacier, and thus to obtain new information relative to these wonderful and little known works of nature and their origin. The trip took two days from Reykholt (Aug. 9 to 10, 1753), as the distance to the glacier proved greater than estimated and the approach to it more difficult. They were, however, fairly well prepared to cope with this, although their shoes were not well adapted for the purpose, while ropes and sticks with iron points were of great help. The fissures and ravines of the ice were successfully crossed but a high wind and snowfall retarded their progress, and as the snowstorm grew heavier their guides refused to go on, and thus they had to return without reaching the summit. The compass also failed them. In descending they noticed the entrance to a valley, but the inclemency of the weather made the exploration of it impossible, and they doubted also that it could correspond to the description of the alleged Thórisdal. Although not accomplishing their purpose, they had made numerous observations of the glacier, but the population was not surprised at the comparative failure of the trip, which in popular opinion ought never to have been undertaken. Nor were greater hopes held out for the success of the travellers' plan of visiting and investigating Surtshellir, a

<sup>1</sup> It is stated that the mountain Herðubreið could be seen from the summit, but that must be a misunderstanding.

<sup>2</sup> *Rejse*, pp. 862-70; *Kvæði*, pp. 86-90.

<sup>3</sup> For the trip of two clergymen in search of Thórisdal 1664, see P. Thoroddsen, *Landfrss. Isl.* II. pp. 102-104. About Thórisdal, see also *Islandica* XV.

cave there in the neighborhood. But here the popular prophecy fell short of fulfilment. They were able to explore the cave carefully, and have described it minutely and have come to the right conclusions as to its origin.<sup>1</sup>

Next in order came Snæfellsjökull. The neighboring population looked upon any attempt at scaling it as rashness, and pictured in dark colors the dangers and difficulties to be encountered, asserting that the roughness of the sides and the steepness of the summit made the mountain inaccessible. Besides, even if the summit was reached, there was the danger of losing one's eyesight from the glare of the sun on the snow. And a story was told about two English sailors who had made an attempt at scaling the mountain; they had, to be sure, reached the top, but only one of them returned, and his eyesight was badly impaired. Then there was the old tradition about a mountain wight to whom any visitor would be unwelcome, and other superstitions of similar kinds were heard. But the explorers disregarded it all. They started from Ingjaldshóll, Eggert's childhood home, on July 1, 1754, at one o'clock in the morning. They were equipped with a thermometer (Fahrenheit), compass, barometer of a very primitive kind, and some crêpe for protecting their eyes against the sun, if necessary. The journey over the surrounding mountains proved rather long and tiresome; next to the glacier was a great number of holes, clefts, and caverns, some of great size. They could ride the ponies for some time over the glacier, but soon it became so uneven that they had to dismount and proceed on foot; the higher they got the more irregular became the compass until it was of no use. When they came to the top of the glacier they found three high peaks thrusting upwards, apparently inaccessible all of them; with much difficulty they finally succeeded in climbing the highest and the narrowest of them; but they could not carry the barometer with them, because it had fallen so low that the mercury was beginning to flow out of the bowl, caused partly by the air contained within the tube. The weather turned out better than expected, and they enjoyed a magnificent view over land and sea from the summit. The return trip was easy.<sup>2</sup>

Their last mountain excursion was unsuccessful. After the

<sup>1</sup> *Rejse*, pp. 86-102; *Kvæði*, pp. 91-92.

<sup>2</sup> *Rejse*, pp. 276-88; *Kvæði*, pp. 93-94.

big eruption of Katla in 1755, the crater was long active, and in the following summer they decided to investigate it. They started in the early morning of Aug. 28, 1756, up the Merkurjökull from the northwest. They were able to ride for some distance on the ice, until the icepeaks and fissures became impassable for the ponies. After dismounting they had to cut steps in the ice and jump over the rifts, and in doing that they broke a valuable thermometer. The higher they ascended the easier was the walking, but then the weather became very threatening, a high wind arose right against them, accompanied by snow and heavy clouds; the compass, however, was regular. They proceeded southeast, and when it cleared for a short while, they could see ahead of them a row of black peaks rising above the snow. These, the guide informed them, stood above the crater. They made for them, but the wind increased so that they could hardly stand, yet they managed to reach the peaks at noon; the weather, however, permitted no further observations; after having waited in a sheltered place throughout the afternoon, and not venturing to spend the night on the mountain, because an eruption had taken place two days before, they retraced their steps and arrived in camp towards night. The bad weather lasted all next day, and as they were in a desert where no pasture was to be found for their ponies, they had to strike camp and encircle the north edge of the glacier; a contemplated ascent from the northeast was frustrated by continued unfavorable weather.<sup>1</sup>

From the preceding we have seen how the explorers heeded no superstitious warnings, but carried out their plans with determination wherever the natural conditions permitted. In other parts of his work the author frequently mentions popular superstitions of all kinds, and his attitude toward them is the same as in the cases mentioned above. He makes a record of them, but he does not believe them. When he does not directly declare them to be without foundations, he frequently tries to find some natural explanation of them, especially in cases when such stories had been told him by trustworthy persons, or such persons had asserted that they had seen such occurrences,<sup>2</sup> and even then he allows for the power of the imagination.<sup>3</sup> Sometimes he ex-

<sup>1</sup> *Rejse*, pp. 768-72; *Kvæði*, pp. 96-98, 200-01.

<sup>2</sup> *Rejse*, pp. 55-56, 793-97, 877-79.

<sup>3</sup> *Rejse*, pp. 740, 1026-28.

presses no opinion, but leaves the matter to the reader.<sup>1</sup> Supernatural powers of stones he considers fabulous.<sup>2</sup> Certain curious stories about animals he is inclined to accept,<sup>3</sup> while he dismisses a recent story about a sea goblin as untrustworthy on account of the observers' poor judgment and lack of circumspection.<sup>4</sup> His description of whales, around which had gathered all kinds of weird tales, is absolutely free from superstition. The belief in witchcraft he condemns, and deplores the excess to which it was carried in the seventeenth century, yet in view of the testimony of veracious people he does not entirely deny the influence of evil spirits and occult practices; these are to be defeated by pure life and religious conduct.<sup>5</sup> The only alleged sorcerer he met turned out to be a very sensible person, and the magic weather which was ascribed to this man's machinations the author considers to have been entirely due to natural causes.<sup>6</sup> Belief in ghosts, phantoms and fairies was, of course, alien to him, and once he seems to have had to interfere in a ghost panic which was raging in his neighborhood, and he allayed it *philosophice* and *physice*, to use his own expression.<sup>7</sup>

Eggert being the author of this great work has got most of the credit for it. But it must be borne in mind that, although he wrote it, the preparations and the materials collected for it were also the work of his travelling companion, Bjarni Pálsson, who was a man of learning, good sense, and great ability. Their collaboration was without a cloud, and they always remained the best of friends. Bjarni survived Eggert by eleven years.

#### IV.

Next in importance are Eggert's poems. Very few of them were printed during his lifetime, and those that were are among the least interesting. Shortly before his death he collected them, divided them into groups and wrote a preface to them. They were not printed until 1832, when they appeared under the title

<sup>1</sup> *Rejse*, pp. 893-95.

<sup>2</sup> *Rejse*, pp. 288-89, 423-26.

<sup>3</sup> *Rejse*, pp. 58, 218-19, 528.

<sup>4</sup> *Rejse*, pp. 537-40.

<sup>5</sup> *Rejse*, pp. 479-81.

<sup>6</sup> *Rejse*, pp. 492-93.

<sup>7</sup> *Andvari*, II. pp. 175-76.

of *Kvæði*,<sup>1</sup> one of the editors being Tómas Sæmundsson, a kindred spirit. Thus they became available in print at a time when taste in poetry was changing, or, at least, about to change. Doubtless many of them were already known to the public; poems often had a remarkably wide circulation in Iceland though they had not been printed. The industrious copyists took care of that. But the printing of the poems at that period was no accident. The torch which Eggert had lighted was being taken up by other hands, rekindled and brought forward anew; his message was rewritten by young men, not with more fervor and sincerity than his, but in a more attractive form so it could be better remembered.<sup>2</sup> Hence his own poems are almost forgotten by the present generation.<sup>3</sup>

In the preface Eggert gives expression to his ideas about poetry with special reference to his own poems. His is the typical eighteenth century view of poetry. For him the art of poetry is the highest form of rhetoric, and the aim of the poet and the orator ought to be the same, that is, to move the human heart and thereby get a hearing and following. He makes clear the difference between the various poets, both as to their intellectual equipment, and their selection and treatment of different subjects. To be a perfect poet three qualities are essential, viz., facility in rhyme, high intellect, and good taste. Necessarily there are but few who have all these combined, yet there may be a number of tolerably good poets. With regard to his own poems he says that he has tried to make the form and music harmonize with the subject. He used both old and new metres, but especially when writing in the latter the metrical rules compelled him to use kennings and other unusual expressions, which he, however, considered no fault, as obscurity was a peculiarity of the ancient poetry. No Latin poems were included in the collection,

<sup>1</sup> *Kvæði . . . útgefín eptir þeim beslu handritum, er fengist gátu.* Kaupmannahöfn, 1832. 8°.

<sup>2</sup> See *Islandica* XI. p. 42ff.

<sup>3</sup> This is shown by a glance at recent anthologies or other selections of Icelandic poetry. In the first edition of the popular anthology *Snót* (1850) were included five poems by Eggert, in the second edition (1865) were ten, in the third edition (1877) none. In the *Söngbók Stúdentafélagsins* (1894) is one poem; in Guðm. Finnbogason's *Lesbók* (1907-10) one ditty; in his *Afmalisdagar* (1916) is one stanza, in the same writer's *Hafræna* (1923) two poems. In Sig. Nordal's *Íslensk lesbók 1400-1900* (1924) there are three specimens of Eggert's poetry. In other recent works I have found nothing.

and for the classical mythological apparatus customary in poetry at that time he substituted generally one drawn from the Norse mythology.

As to the character of his poems they are with a few exceptions of the didactic and moralizing kind, sometimes in a serious and direct manner, at other times under a veil of satire or ridicule. In this he, of course, followed the usages of his time. His subjects are often badly adapted to poetic treatment, and although the poems are sensible, logical, even impressive, nay inspiring at times, they are frequently unesthetic, and show lack of good taste now and then, but this is generally to be ascribed to the times. Obviously rhyme did not come easy to him. Eggert's poetic vein was more a product of cultivation than a natural gift. He chose the metrical form as the more agreeable and attractive for expressing what he had in mind, following the Virgilian maxim which he quotes: *Gratior est pulcro veniens e corpore virtus*. His poems are therefore essentially essays or treatises in rhyme, for a better understanding of which he provides introductory summaries and a quantity of footnotes containing short comments or explanations of words, which in a multitude of cases was very necessary considering the many novel, strange and antiquated words and expressions he was in the habit of using. But to equip poems with such paraphernalia was entirely in the style of the period.

His patriotic poems are most noteworthy, both because they are more numerous than those of any Icelandic poet before him, and above all because some of them strike an entirely new note. As most of these poems are undated and the arrangement of them in the collection is somewhat arbitrary it is difficult to find their succession and to follow their development. He has placed in front the poem called *Island* (Iceland)<sup>1</sup> which gives a survey of Icelandic history from the colonization of the country down to his own time. The historical views expressed there are conventional, and the framework awkward to say the least. He personifies the country as a woman into whose mouth the poem is put, and she informs us that she first was married to the colonists, by whom she had many children. Her early sons and daughters were vigorous, brave, and wise, but deterioration had set in of late, although she fails to give any good reasons for the change, especially as she emphasizes the change from Catholicism to

<sup>1</sup> *Kvæði*, pp. 1-29.

Lutheranism, which had given her children a new and better light on the eternal verities and freed them from greedy priests, while the king took all the property of the cloisters which, she says, he has repaid in full—yet the deterioration became most marked after all this had happened. So she has to blame it all on the vices and shortcomings of her children. But although things are bad, there is a gleam of hope for better days. She has now become old and decrepit, but in spite of this she has been betrothed to King Fredrick V, not because of his love for such an old woman, but out of the kindness of his heart, and it is from this that she ventures to hope for better days—a rather inelegant form of salvation, though entirely in conformity with the attitude towards the monarch at that time.

Another poem of bitter criticism is the *Tríðægra*,<sup>1</sup> a satire of the type describing visits to imaginary countries, which had been revived by Swift and in Scandinavia by Holberg.<sup>2</sup> In a dream the poet is transported to the land of the *Sukkudokkar*, a name derived from an alleged Greek word *ψυχοδοχοι* (hunters of butterflies). Here he sees beings in human form and with human behavior whose principal occupation is to catch butterflies which they live on. The next night the poet is approached by a former inhabitant of the country who has left his burial mound to inform him about these strange beings he had observed the night before. They had indeed, he says, been good men and brave, but, as time went on, they had offended the guardian spirits of the country by their foolish behavior, unwise actions and neglect of useful things. The angered deities had given them time to reform, but when they did not mend their ways, the gods changed them into those wretched beings, only a few of the inhabitants escaping that fate. The satire is not clever or subtle, and has the same moralizing tendency as most of the foreign works of the type, and it is interesting now only as an Icelandic specimen of that genre. It shows the poet in the most despondent mood over the future of his nation.

His *Mánamál* (Speech of Máni)<sup>3</sup> makes pleasanter reading. This is a colloquy between Ingólf, the first settler of the country,

<sup>1</sup> *Kvæði*, pp. 132-40.

<sup>2</sup> See J. Paludan, *Om Holbergs Niels Klim., med særligt Hensyn til tidligere Satirer i Form af opdigte og vidunderlige Reiser*. Kjøbenhavn, 1878. 8°.

<sup>3</sup> *Kvæði*, pp. 77-84.

Thorstein, his son, Thorkell Máni, his grandson, and one of their neighboring colonists. During the stillness of the night they leave their burial mounds, and take a view of the country and its inhabitants. Ingólf looks over the land he had taken possession of, and finds a smoke disagreeable to his nostrils emanating from his old home.<sup>1</sup> This gives him the occasion for a tirade against the living people. He dwells upon the good, old times, the festivities, fights and faith of his contemporaries which their descendants now neglected or had entirely abandoned, and he expresses his sympathy for the King of Prussia who still practiced warfare and strife. Máni does not deny his Prussian majesty's bravery but disapproves of his sacrificing men to the goddess of death, whereupon Thorstein reminds them that they are not concerned about the king but their own native land. Máni then defends the change of faith and says that the god they now worship is propitious to them. This soothes Ingólf's anger, and at their request Máni pronounces a prophecy about the future of the people, saying that their distress will soon come to an end, they will attend to their duties and their leaders will work for the good of the country; there will come forth men who reform their faults and failings, improve the government, spread knowledge, and revive literary activity; seafaring will be successfully restored, and prosperity and justice prevail. This pleases all the ghosts, and as day dawns they retire to their subterranean domiciles, satisfied with the outlook. The speech of Máni expresses the poet's fondest hopes for the future of his nation.<sup>2</sup>

If Eggert hurled reproaches at his countrymen, he never had a word of blame for his native land. He had nothing but praise for it. His love for it was genuine and without reserve. What exasperated him was that his compatriots had not energy, knowledge and understanding enough to make use of all the things land and sea offered them, and therefore he never tired of pointing out to them that the land was good enough, if only the inhabitants were wide awake and enterprising. There are numerous references to this in his poems, but he has devoted several poems to this subject alone. For instance the poems *Heimsótt* (Homesickness) and *Islands-sæla* (The Bliss of Iceland).<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This comes from the new industrial establishments in Reykjavík.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. also *Visa um Ísland* (Kvæði, p. 195).

<sup>3</sup> Kvæði, pp. 116-21.

In the first he analyzes the nostalgia of those who live in foreign parts, especially of those who are born in mountainous country—a subject which from that time on was often treated by Norwegian and Icelandic poets while living in Denmark, perhaps originally under influence from Haller. The poet describes how the sight of the mountains in their various colors delighted him in his youth, and how surprised he was when he first saw the flat land, that is, Denmark. In the beginning Copenhagen made a strong appeal to him, and he thought he would like to live there for ever, but he was then ignorant of the magic power which his native land exercised over him, and he soon felt this in its full force, desiring nothing more than to return to the haunts of his youth, tired as he was of city life. In another poem, the humorous *Hafnarsæla* (The Bliss of Copenhagen)<sup>1</sup> he describes in detail the pleasures of the Danish capital and contrasts them with the hard and primitive life in Iceland, yet apparently with a preference for the latter. The *Islands-sæla* from beginning to end praises Icelandic nature and the various phases of life there. First the poet depicts the natural beauties of the country. In this respect Eggert's poems are a new departure in Icelandic literature, since they describe nature and beauties of the wilderness; here, of course, he was under the influence of foreign poets of the century; nor did he succeed, any more than they, in getting beyond general descriptions, and giving concrete pictures of landscapes. Next he dwells upon the life in the country at the various times of the year, the amusements and occupations appertaining to the different seasons, the plants and the animals which both give a joy to the eye and food for the body; the economic side is seldom left out of view, and the native products at all times given preference to the foreign ones. The poem winds up with a protest against those who derogate the country.<sup>2</sup> In another poem, the *Skjald-meyjarkvæði* (The Poem of the Amazon),<sup>3</sup> he praises in a similar

<sup>1</sup> *Kvæði*, pp. 122-24.

<sup>2</sup> There is this forceful stanza (p. 121):

Pó að margur upp og aptur  
Ísland niði búðar-raptur,  
Meira má enn kvíkindis kjaptur  
Krapthur guðs og sannleikans, etc.

<sup>3</sup> *Kvæði*, pp. 218-19.

manner, if in a humorous vein, the good qualities of Hornstrandir, the bleakest and most remote of Icelandic districts.

The metrical narrative of his travels brought together under the general title of *Ferðarolla* (A Scroll of Travels)<sup>1</sup> moves slowly and makes heavy reading.

## V.

The most widely read of Eggert's poems, and in fact the greatest of them, is the *Búnaðarbálkur*<sup>2</sup> which was printed separately at Hrappsey, 1783 (see p. 34), and twice reprinted,<sup>3</sup> and translated into Danish by Finnur Magnússon, the poet's nephew.<sup>4</sup> In one hundred stanzas Eggert describes the country life in its bad and good aspects. It is divided into three cantos. The first of these is called *Eymdaróður* (Song of Misery), and goes to the roots of the unhappiness of people. No doubt there are evil spirits abroad in the Icelandic atmosphere, and they are prejudices—the innate, false and unsubstantiated opinions; these are the causes of the people's misery and poverty. The men who hold these prejudices do not avail themselves of the gifts of God, are unmindful of the offerings of nature around them, and pay no attention to the changes of the seasons beyond that required of them by the bare necessity of procuring their daily bread. They get married and their wives are equally slothful and thoughtless; the children of such a union die or turn out badly. When the nights are long, their homes are visited by ghosts and phantoms scaring the family who see all kinds of imaginary terrors. The spring with its long days and bright nights gives them no pleasure; they pay no attention to its life and beauties, to the joyful birds filling the air with song, or to the ground covered with beautiful flowers. They do not understand the will of God who wishes that the whole creation shall enjoy His gifts and make use of them.

The second canto, styled *Náttúrulist* (The Joy of Nature), introduces to us a young man, the hero of the poem, standing on

<sup>1</sup> *Kvæði*, pp. 86-99.

<sup>2</sup> This is the title of the section relating to rural affairs in the ancient law-codes.

<sup>3</sup> The 2d ed. is in the *Armann á Alþingi* I. 1829, pp. 115-172; the 3d, in *Kvæði*, pp. 30-50.

<sup>4</sup> *Det islandske Landlevnet. Et Læredigt i tre Sange.* Kjøbenhavn 1803. 8°, separately reprinted from the *Skandinavisk Museum* I. (cf. *Icel. Cat.* p. 439).

**H**ugleidningar,  
 fráinsættar í Líðum  
 sem nefnast  
**B**únaðar-  
**B**ókabólkur,  
 Sundurftiptar í þróu  
 Þvæði,  
 um dáglegt Brotapar-Líff Ís-  
 lendinga; Hversu laft sín hica lós-  
 morgumi; Hvernig vera eige, ed-  
 ur og verda mætte.  
 Hier er sleppt því almenninga, sem enn bríwa  
 til Nýfjöldar og goodrar Dægradvalar,  
 dugande Þændur, af hverum (Lós sín  
 Gude) marger eru til, þó fær ad reik-  
 na mít hinum físlanum sem hlut a  
 t Egmond. Óðr og fleirum klaußum.  
 Sunnt er varíð i Fullsælu, Íslands-  
 Sælu, Heim-Sótt og vijdar.  
 Prentadur að Skappsey, í því konungl.  
 privilegerada Bookbrycerie,  
 af Guðmundi Jónssyne, 1783

TITLE-PAGE OF THE FIRST EDITION OF THE *Búnaðarbólkur*.

the seashore at nightfall when all is quiet and silent and cast in shadow, meditating upon his future life, and saddened by his poverty which prevents him from starting a home of his own. The dawn of day awakens him from these reflections, and he sees the seabirds come forth, and joyfully seek their food, singing the praise of the Creator who provides for them. In the early morning light the young man wanders from the shore until before him opens a valley and in it he finds a pretty, green hollow which appeals to him as an ideal place to build a home. We are informed of its beauties and advantages, the flowers, the birds, and the fish in the stream; and fascinated by all this he builds his home here, but feels lonely seeing all the animals round him having a mate, so he goes and gets a wife, naturally a good one, and thus ends the canto after the foundations of his happiness have been laid.

The third canto, called *Munaðardæla* (The Vale of Bliss), opens with his meditations upon the happiness of him who knows well how to manage his land and earn his living from it in peace and by industry; what joy work gives to him who undertakes it thoughtfully and with serene mind; and he describes the various labors on the farm, always supporting his arguments by examples drawn from surrounding nature. He tells about his travelling far away from home, and his eagerness to get home again where he is received by his good wife who has been impatiently awaiting him; the happy homecoming is dwelt on at some length and ends with praise of his wife who is loved and respected not only by him and the whole household, but also, on account of her helpfulness, by all who are in distress. When winter comes the outdoor work decreases, and the family enjoy the fruits of their summer labor, so the winter instead of being unpleasant in fact provides men with various forms of amusements. The farm is a good place, it gives a smaller return than the sea, but it is more secure, and now he proceeds to tell about its products. Even in the winter one can grow vegetables and thus add to the pleasures of the table, just as other nations do; but it is a pity that his own compatriots have not got used to this and even scorn it. The spiritual and intellectual needs of the household are provided for by devotional services in the home and the reading of good literature during the long evenings. No evil spirits can enter here. The coming of spring is described



*Original from malmgård Dyrnæs i Island.*

AN ICELANDIC HOMESTEAD, 18TH CENTURY. (FROM THE *Reise*. REDUCED.)

together with the work which it calls for. Here he enumerates a number of foreign plants which could profitably be cultivated in Iceland, and with much benefit to the people; to this enumeration is added a catalogue of wild native plants, which might be used for various purposes, nutritive and medicinal, and some of which would make wholesome substitutes for such importations as tobacco and tea. To derive enjoyment and profit from nature is all important; and men should not be like pigs picking acorns at the roots of trees and never looking up to see what the acorns are or where they come from. Let every one work, because it gives joy; it is a happy lot to die after a laborious life, the rest is long enough hereafter, and the country will bear witness to a well-spent life. The poem finally closes with some quotations from the Ecclesiastes.

Thoroughly Icelandic as the poem is in form and substance, nevertheless it is evident that it is inspired and influenced by foreign movements and poetry. The doctrines of the physiocrats had found their way to the North, and the writings of Rousseau were becoming known there, and of this we find traces in the poem.<sup>1</sup> We can also find poetical models for it. Praising country life at the expense of that of the cities we find first in the North in two didactic poems, of the third decade of the eighteenth century, by the Norwegian poet and adventurer Povel Juul, which became very popular, at least one of them, and went through many editions.<sup>2</sup> I do not doubt that Eggert knew them. More immediate models were, however, Haller's *Die Alpen*,<sup>3</sup> and Chr. B. Tullin's *Majdagen*,<sup>4</sup> both of which praise the freedom, beauty, and happiness of rural life as contrasted with urban. But there was a difference, because Eggert could not draw the same parallels in Iceland as they did. No towns were there. So he seeks the contrast in the rural life itself, showing the difference between the life of the superstitious

<sup>1</sup> The following words in the dedicatory letter to Síra Björn point to Rousseau: 'Vitæ genus insuper, quod innocentissimum est, saluberrimum atque commodissimum; immo præ reliquis statui integritatis congruens et maxime delectabile' (the Hrappsey ed.).

<sup>2</sup> *En god Bonde, hans Avl og Biæring*. Kiöbenhavn 1721. 8°.—*Et lyksaligt Liv efterænkt da Indbilding og Forfarenhed derom disputerede*. Kiöbenhavn 1721. 4°.

<sup>3</sup> This was first published in his *Versuch Schweizerischer Gedichte*. Bern 1734.

<sup>4</sup> Appeared in 1758, and was often reprinted.

laggard and that of the virtuous, energetic, intelligent, and patriotic householder. He doubtless found plenty of the former kind in his country, so the picture is realistic, and for the latter he had, according to his own words, a model within his own family.

As mentioned above he lived for several years with Síra Björn, his brother-in-law. The poem is dedicated to him. In his dedication the poet writes that while the second canto is an account of the pastor's early life, the third canto is a life-like picture of him and his wife, their home and their work by day and year.<sup>1</sup> Síra Björn was a remarkable man. When he became pastor of Sauðlauksdal he was poor, but within a few years he had become prosperous through his unremitting labor, combined with foresight, initiative and originality, in conducting the farm which belonged to the parsonage, for that, however, never neglecting his pastoral duties which were heavy. He was an austere, humane man, probably more respected than loved by his flock for which he set the best of examples in rectitude, industry, and thrift. Nowhere in Iceland was found such a garden as at Sauðlauksdal.<sup>2</sup> The pastor-farmer was tireless in experimenting with the cultivation of foreign plants and trees, and while he was frequently successful with the former, the trees caused him many a disappointment, but he was dauntless in always trying something new. He was the first to cultivate potatoes in the country, which has proved a great boon to the population. He was equally interested in Icelandic plants as is shown by his book on the use of them.<sup>3</sup> Thus Eggert's poem is in fact a real picture of the two sides of Icelandic rural life about the middle of the eighteenth century, and if he did not bring out all the causes of the sordid side of this life, he effectively exposed the fundamental ones, and by doing so, took the first step to eradicate them.

<sup>1</sup> The dedication is in Latin in the Hrappsey edition; an Icelandic translation of it precedes the 2d edition. It is dated at Sauðlauksdal 1764, but the poem was finished in 1762 (cf. *Andvari* II. pp. 182-83).

<sup>2</sup> See *Andvari* I. pp. 177-79, II. p. 140.

<sup>3</sup> *Grasnytiar*. Kaupmannahöfn 1783. 8°.—He also wrote a guide for farmers, called *Alli*, and another for housewives, styled *Arnþjörg*; the first has been printed three times (see *Icel. Cat.* p. 218), the latter only once.—For the life of Síra Björn, see *Skírnir* XCVIII. 1924, pp. 90-139 (by Hannes Þorsteinsson).

Being convinced of the ample resources of the Icelandic soil, if they were only made use of, he did not stop at mentioning them in this and other poems. He wrote a large work, which he called *Lachanologia*, or book on vegetables and plants, both of native and foreign origin, which might be used for food, including rules for their cultivation, preservation, and preparation. This was one of the books which were lost with him, but fortunately Síra Björn had made an abstract of it, and this was printed in 1774.<sup>1</sup> A counterpart to this was his *Potologia* which never was printed but still exists in the author's original manuscript.<sup>2</sup> This deals with all kinds of drinks, foreign and domestic, the making of them and their use and value. Special attention is, of course, paid to the making of beverages out of domestic materials. Such drinks he considered both cheaper and more wholesome than the imported ones. Eggert is one of the first to advocate temperance among his compatriots. He saw altogether too much of the abuse of alcoholic drinks, and how ineptiety was encouraged by the rapacious foreign merchants who always had plenty of bad, hard liquor for sale, even when they were short of the principal necessities for which the people were asking. In many poems Eggert touches this subject, showing what degradation this leads to, exhorting people to refrain from the strong drinks but instead make their own wines or mead of native products.<sup>3</sup> Tea he considered also a foreign luxury, the use of which should be discouraged.<sup>4</sup>

In a poem mentioned above, Eggert looked for the rehabilita-

<sup>1</sup> *Stutt ágrip úr Lachanologia eda Maturtabók.* Kaupmannahöfn 1774. 8° (see *Icel. Cat.* p. 439).

<sup>2</sup> *Drecka bidur góð aata, edur nockrar greiner um þad, hvíliker drycker eru til heilnæmra vista holler og samkvæmer edle manna.* Enn helst og ser í lage um dryck Islandinga og hans margfalda tegunder etc. Samantekid í Saudl. dal aar 1761. But there is also another title as follows: *Potologia Islandorum sive Tractatus historico-dialecticus de potu Islandorum variisque ejus generibus cum eorum usu at abusu . . .* Þod er *Um dryck Islandinga og hans margfalldar tegunder, um naattúrlega og tilbúna drycke innlenda og útlenda, smeklausa og smackande, sterka og lina, svalande og narande, aafenga og þaafenga, skadlega og nylsamlega, hörneg þeir brúkest og brúkast eige hier aa lande.* 4°. ff. 60. (Advocates Library, Edinburgh, 21. 3. 5.)

<sup>3</sup> Of the poems on the subject, see *Kveði*, pp. 142-46, 172-79, 199. Upon the *Hegrakvæði* (172ff.), which shows the evil effects of drinking, follows immediately *Mjaðdrekka* (178f.) in praise of the native mead.

<sup>4</sup> See *Teflóskuvísur*, in *Kveði* pp. 146-47, etc.

tion of the country through the benevolent aid of the monarch. We learn from the present poem that he saw deeper. The rehabilitation was to come from the people themselves. That was his real message to them, and it was a very timely one.

## VI.

It was difficult to keep the absolute monarch out of the picture when any suggestions or plans were made for national progress. Consequently it is not surprising to find several poems by Eggert written in honor of the royal family. Our democratic age may scoff at them, but there is no reason to believe that they were not sincerely meant. They were perfectly in keeping with the spirit of the time. The absolute king was the center of every thing, and the idea of the monarchy as a divine institution had been somewhat modified by the then generally accepted doctrines, so as to give it a more popular aspect. The monarchy, according to these, was based upon an original compact between the ruler and the people. Hence the general opinion that the enlightened monarchy was for the best of the people; the principal object of the king was to look out for the welfare of his subjects, and without him nothing could be done. Eggert unquestionably shared this common opinion of the day. He was a thorough believer in authority from above as essential for the good of the people, and he frequently expresses the conviction that full equality would be dangerous, and he deplores the fact that the poverty of his country has obliterated class distinction, as no discipline and enforcement of law were possible without it.<sup>1</sup> Perhaps this belief in the blessings of the royal power was strengthened by his interpretation of Icelandic history, that the kings of Norway had brought peace to the country, at least he praises their mercy and mildness towards Iceland;<sup>2</sup> in another place he gives the kings credit for aid and benevolence of which they were entirely innocent;<sup>3</sup> and he acquits them of rapacity in seizing the lands belonging to the cloisters.<sup>4</sup> This, of course, is all due to his lack of clear conception of Icelandic history. Less excusable is, perhaps, his failure to see the relation between the

<sup>1</sup> See *Kvæði*, p. 15 (st. 31, note), 26 (st. 87), 186 (xv, st. 1ff.).

<sup>2</sup> *Kvæði*, pp. 14-15 (st. 29-31).

<sup>3</sup> *Kvæði*, p. 77 (st. 22).

<sup>4</sup> *Kvæði*, p. 18 (st. 43).

crown and the one class which he heartily hated, the merchant monopolists. He acknowledges that it would be best if the trade was free,<sup>1</sup> and he seldom loses an opportunity to express his contempt for the foreign traders of his times, reproaching his compatriots with too much deference to them, yet he never connects them with the king, although the royal government had let them loose on the people and protected them. The only excuse for this attitude may be found in the fact that the Danish government was about to change its policy in the matter, or rather was trying to change it, due to the persistent representations and urgings of Skúli Magnússon, Eggert's personal friend and co-worker for national revival.<sup>2</sup> King Fredrick V, although weak, vacillating, and dissipated, certainly was a well-meaning and humane ruler, and had the good fortune to be surrounded by able advisers who were anxious to better the condition of the people. Skúli obtained big sums of money from the royal treasury for industrial development in Iceland,<sup>3</sup> and other enterprises, the government took charge of the trade for a while, and in various other respects showed its interest in promoting the welfare of the inhabitants. All this was without lasting results because of the fear of the government to break away from the policy of the past. Yet that it actually showed an interest in this and helped it along so surprised the Icelanders that they took to praising the monarch for his good will, and I believe no one was more prolific in writing such eulogies than Eggert. Even in poems where he expressed his outraged feelings at the humiliation of his country, as in the case of the Icelandic trade being offered to the highest bidder at a public auction, he could not abstain from praises for the monarch.<sup>4</sup>

An additional reason for these poems may possibly be that he wished to revive the old court poetry. It is noticeable that most of his poems on the royal family are in ancient metres and are artificial to the utmost. On all occasions during the reign of Fredrick V, Eggert was ready with his pen to express homage to the king on behalf of Iceland. He began in 1749 on the three

<sup>1</sup> *Kvæði*, pp. 17-18 (st. 39-40).

<sup>2</sup> See Jón Jónsson (Aðils), *Skúli Magnússon landfógeti*. Reykjavík 1911. 8°.

<sup>3</sup> See Eggert's poem *Um þær nýu innréttningar á Íslandi* (*Kvæði*, pp. 84-85) which was printed separately at the time.

<sup>4</sup> See *Markaðarríma* (*Kvæði*, pp. 168-71).

hundredth anniversary of the accession of the Oldenborg dynasty to the Danish throne,<sup>1</sup> he wrote for the king's birthday, 1757,<sup>2</sup> at the celebration of the centenary of the absolute monarchy,<sup>3</sup> and on the death of Fredrick V and the ascension of Christian VI in 1766.<sup>4</sup> On the death of Queen Louise in 1752 he wrote a poem in Danish and Latin,<sup>5</sup> and also made an allegorical picture showing Iceland taking part in the sorrow of the royal family.<sup>6</sup> On such occasions animate and inanimate nature was supposed to express or show profound grief. None of these poems make interesting reading, they are probably neither better nor worse than similar products issuing from the pen of Danish and Norwegian poets on such occasions. I am almost inclined to think that they are a little better, their language at least has the virtue of obscurity. The standard of the poetry written for special occasions was at that time at its lowest, whether pertaining to the

<sup>1</sup> *Kvæði*, pp. 74-77; see above, p. 8.

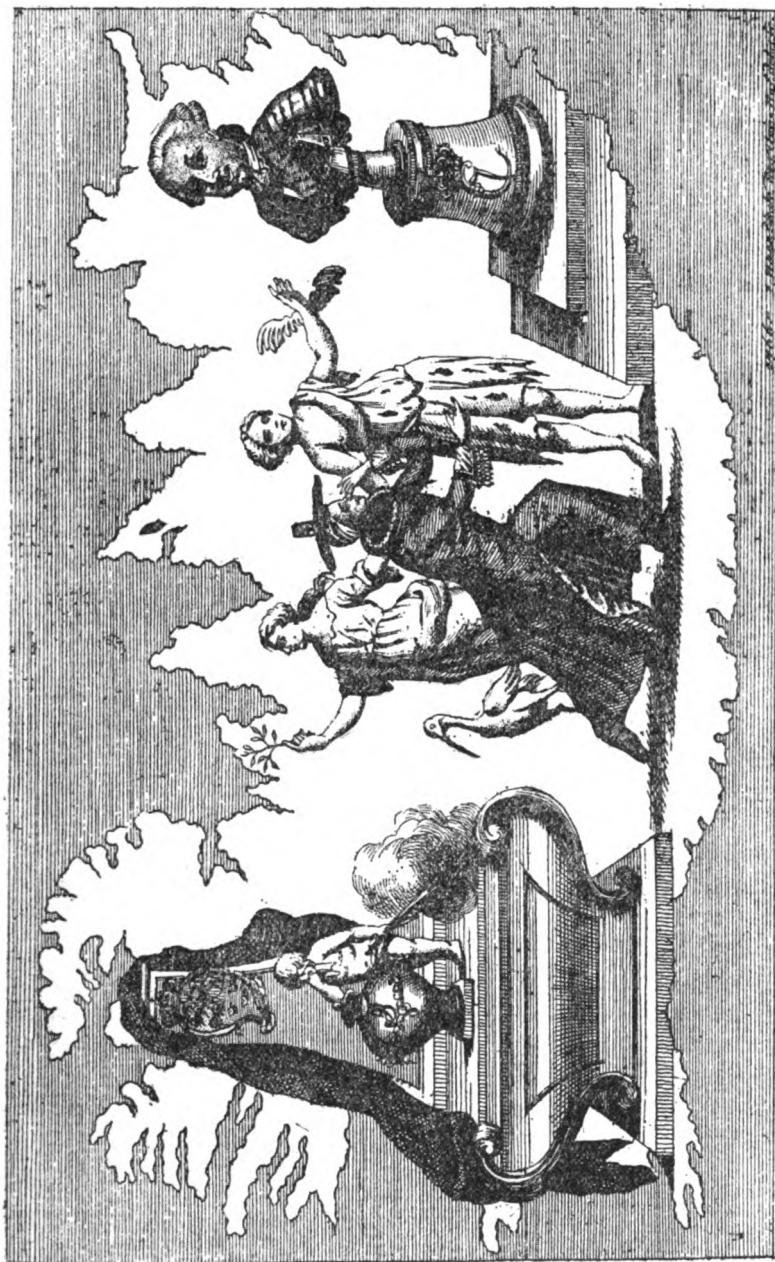
<sup>2</sup> *Friðriksvarði á Íslandi* (*Kvæði*, pp. 68-72).

<sup>3</sup> *Einvalds vísur* (*Kvæði*, pp. 72-74).

<sup>4</sup> *Kvæði*, pp. 103-107; see above, p. 14. Note the similarity between st. 3 of this poem and the beginning of Matth. Jochumsson's obituary poem on Jón Hjaltalín.

<sup>5</sup> Printed in *Fuldständig Beskrivelse over den kongelige Parade-Seng*, etc. Kjøbenhavn 1752. 8°. (See *Icel. Cat.*, p. 367.)

<sup>6</sup> This picture is described in *Kvæði*, pp. 107-109. Here is, I believe, the first pictorial representation of Iceland personified as a woman, which in slightly different form reappears in the head-piece of *Friðreksdrápa* (1766), reproduced on p. 43. This latter picture is by Jonas Haas (1720-75), the Danish engraver, but that it was drawn under Eggert's directions we may presume from the fact that he felt called upon to defend it when some of his countrymen ridiculed it, see *Kvæði*, p. 194 (*Ísland með ermahöppum*). This personification of the country is met with in his poem *Ísland*, and he also personifies the Icelandic tongue as a woman in the *Sótt og dawði íslenskunnar*. Whether the *Ísland* is older than the memorial picture of 1752, I am unable to tell; I should guess that they were not far apart. Here, I believe, is the origin of the idea of the *Fjallkona* as an allegory of Iceland. Síra Björn, in his poem on Eggert (*Lachanologia*, 1774) calls her *Fjörgyn*, but Bjarni Thorarensen is the first to call her *Fjallkona* (the word occurs in early Icelandic, meaning a giantess living in a mountain). A picture of this allegorical woman was made by Johann Baptist Zwecker (1815-76), the German painter, which was published as a frontispiece to G. E. J. Powell and Eíríkur Magnússon's translation of the *Icelandic legends*, 2d series (London 1866), and Benedikt Gröndal incorporated this figure into his drawing commemorating the millenary of the colonization of Iceland 1874. (See *Icel. Cat.*, p. 199; cf. *Isafold* II. 1875, col. 94.)



HEADPIECE OF THE *Fróðræks-drápa* (1766).

royal family or other mortals. Some of Eggert's poems concerning the latter are far above the average.<sup>1</sup>

When we read the most serious poems of that period, passages in them often strike us as comical, while the humorous or satirical ones seem frequently devoid of what we associate with humor. The reason for this is doubtless that with those poets the sublime and the ridiculous, the solemn and the platitudinous were hardly to be separated. This is true in the case of many of Eggert's poems, there is really very little humor in the so-called humorous ones, whereas passages in the others sometimes make us laugh. Perhaps the most humorous is the *Lærdómsundur* (The Wonders of Learning) in which he makes fun of Linnæus and especially his ardent followers for pretending to grasp everything and classifying it, and for giving names from the classical mythology to all sorts of creatures of land and sea.<sup>2</sup> Some of his ditties or individual stanzas, however, are often sharp and hit the mark. The comical *Hödduríma* is a rather well-done, if at times somewhat coarse, imitation of the first canto of Holberg's *Peder Paars*. One side of the poet's character, his love for animals, is revealed by the pleasant *Tíilingaríma* (Sparrow-song)<sup>3</sup> and *Hrafnahróður* (In Praise of Ravens);<sup>4</sup> the first tells the story of two sparrows which the poet saved from the clutches of death, kept in a cage in his room throughout the winter, trained, and finally sent as a present to the Danish king, at whose court they thrived well. The latter is an obituary poem on a small raven. As a true Icelander he also sang the praise of the native ponies, but none of these poems are very striking.

Almost all of Eggert's larger poems, even the humorous ones, contain a moral lesson; that was according to the maxim *utile dulci*. He often mentions the consolation and great value of philosophy. He was a religious man, but his religion seems to have been vague, and there are many references to virtue and wisdom of the indefinite kind. In the *Leiðarsteinn* (Loadstone)<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> E.g. *Sigurdrísumál* (*Kvæði*, pp. 179–81), etc.

<sup>2</sup> *Kvæði*, pp. 152–55. I do not know whether this has any connection with Haller's criticism of Linnæus. He said that Linnæus was aping Adam by naming all animals afresh, and accused him of being an autocrat in botany and zoology (cf. B. D. Jackson, *Linnæus*. London 1923, p. 277).

<sup>3</sup> *Kvæði*, pp. 205–14.

<sup>4</sup> *Kvæði*, pp. 215–16.

<sup>5</sup> *Kvæði*, pp. 56–62.

he puts forth his conception of the former. The poem represents a wanderer who is debating with himself what course of life he should follow, being in grave doubt as to it, because he sees how many have attained success and apparent happiness in life, although their conduct has been contrary to what he would consider right. But he makes up his mind that there is a God, who rewards virtue and punishes sin, who rules the whole creation, especially the human beings, whom he has given free will and conscience to guide their conduct. Unfortunately men often act against their reason and the voice of conscience, the evil consequences of which are pointed out. The chief element of virtue is constancy, as illustrated with examples from classical literature. God in his mercy has, besides the natural light, revealed his will to men, so they can reach the perfectness of virtue and through it eternal happiness. Another poem, the *Lukkudans* (Fortune's Dance),<sup>1</sup> pictures the two kinds of fortune, one is the goddess of the ancients who runs blindly on a globe over sea and land, whereby her instability is evident; she is not the true one, and he who catches her will suffer the fate of Ixion and embrace a cloud for Juno. The true and steady fortune goes by measured steps, and is created by God, and only the wise and good can obtain her, and they alone will know how to conduct themselves both in prosperity and adversity. And what constitutes happiness in this world? Martial has given an answer to this in one of his epigrams (x. 47) of which we have two renderings by Eggert,<sup>2</sup> and according to which the requirements for it are sufficient inherited property, peace, health, friends, good wife, and equanimity. But Eggert in his *Vitringasela* (The Happiness of the Wise)<sup>3</sup> maintains that this will not satisfy the wise man; he must use well the gifts of God, be helpful to his neighbors, be industrious, know himself, love virtue, obey the dictates of his intellect and conscience, and be fearless of others' criticism. Good conscience is the impregnable fortress of the wise, and continuous progress in wisdom the highest happiness.

During the last four years of his life Eggert took to reading theological books, and this ultimately brought about a change in his religious views, as two poems written in the year he died bear witness. The earlier of these,<sup>4</sup> an acrostic of his name,

<sup>1</sup> *Kvæði*, pp. 64-66.

<sup>2</sup> *Kvæði*, pp. 103, 62-63.

<sup>3</sup> *Kvæði*, pp. 63-64.

<sup>4</sup> *Kvæði*, pp. 113-14 (*Viðurkenningsdálmur*).

contains the confession that he has found nothing in science and philosophy which can satisfy his thought, but finally found consolation in the revealed word of God, and he throws himself upon His mercy. The second poem,<sup>1</sup> written only a fortnight before his death, is a review of his poetical writings. He uses as a text I. Cor. 11, v. 31-32, and accordingly takes himself to task for his transgressions, analyzing the reasons for his writing, not forgetting anything that might count against him, such as having a few times written satirical poems to sacred tunes. He hopes that now he has made a clean breast of it, some of his poetry may ultimately serve some good cause, the rest being buried in oblivion. It is as if he had some forebodings that his end was near.

## VII.

A favorite author of Eggert's was Balthasar Gracian, the Spanish Jesuit, whose famous *Oraculo manual* he found an invaluable guide to right conduct. Selections from it he rendered into Icelandic as early as 1753, but this has never been printed and his original manuscript is now in the Bodleian Library, Oxford.<sup>2</sup> He also wrote a most eulogistic poem on the book, extolling it as one that could cure the blind of their blindness, make the seeing see clearer, strengthen the clairvoyance of those endowed with second-sight, and so on, and confessing that it had been a help to him in his trials and troubles.<sup>3</sup> The translation is not made from the Spanish original but from Amelot de la Houssaie's French version, the title of which is *L'homme du cour*, and which was first printed in Paris, 1684, and thereafter went through a number of editions.<sup>4</sup> Eggert did not at first divide the maxims into chapters or sections as is done in the original and the French translation, but afterwards he made such a division, which agrees to a great extent with that of the original, writing the headings usually in the margin. The French translator had annotated the work with numerous footnotes principally drawn from classical literature. These Eggert has very frequently incorporated into his rendering without any indication that they did not belong to the original text. The selection of

<sup>1</sup> *Kvaði*, pp. 232-36 (*Endurkvíða*).

<sup>2</sup> MS. Bor. 97: *Nockrar hnyttilegar heimspeke-greiner*, etc., see p. 47.

<sup>3</sup> *Kvaði*, pp. 189-90.

<sup>4</sup> What particular edition Eggert used can not be ascertained. They did not differ much.

Rockar  
Hyllegar heimspele  
Dréinez, e  
Ljttkunar forcalnis  
Lipnadar Reglur  
útdregnar  
Isels Spanskia herra  
Balthasar Gracian:  
Hosmane  
El Frósku d' Islandia  
útlagdar  
Anno 1753.

1. <sup>en</sup> Dulz  
Sind Blutarene latur han vydalt  
Héonen ei hvidla persianenar.  
Sá ím talar han ótan ad demalt.  
Ven Orulu Gude likast ím dul meñena. <sup>II.</sup>  
Sá eirn mä mikill kallað ím veit, ó lá ím <sup>þa</sup> <sup>þa</sup>  
veit han gietur.  
Jeneca leiger ad eirn dagur vitur manu:  
Læ betre en frot leingoda lis circ heimskirna  
Heimskirna mæ er for myrkad tungol.  
Vit æ breide er leim agu og headir.  
Ef breiten (fran hverniden) svilgez ey, ha  
er vitet obyria.  
Julius anar þó se i ar lydommen vore hif-  
in eblara manu, gull gáusugra, gom-  
steinn haußdingia.  
Læ domstas hvíll er græn; eis leipande

THE FIRST PAGE OF GRACIAN'S *L'homme de cour*. TRANSLATOR'S AUTO-  
GRAPH.

the maxims is somewhat at random, but as a rule the French text is closely followed; on the whole it reads well; at times occur, however, rather clumsy renderings and occasionally the choice of words is unfortunate. The translation deserves a closer study, but there is not space for this here. Gracian's work has had a great influence upon Eggert, as may be seen from some of his poems, and as the translation is also linguistically interesting it ought to be printed. But even Gracian ceased to please him. In his last poem mentioned above, he admits that even this favorite of his was capable of recommending things not consistent with the conduct of a Christian.<sup>1</sup>

### VIII.

In his efforts to reform the mother tongue Eggert was a pioneer. I have in an earlier volume in this series briefly mentioned his work in this field. No one at that time had a better knowledge of the spoken language, since he had travelled practically through the whole country, and paid special attention to this. I have summarized there his description of the speech in the various districts, and also given an account of his poem on what he styled the disease and death of the Icelandic.<sup>2</sup> This was a stirring, if to our taste somewhat strange, appeal to his compatriots to preserve the tongue of their ancestors. As the poem was not printed until 1832, it probably did not become very widely known at the time, although quite a few manuscript copies of it exist. I take it for granted, although I am unable directly to prove it, that Eggert's efforts in this respect were influenced by similar movements in the other Scandinavian countries.

It is interesting to cast a glance at his prose style as it appears in his writings at various times. The earliest of these which has come under my notice is his translation of Gracian's book. Although we find there many impurities of foreign origin, a somewhat forced diction with many unusual words and expressions, which occasionally are hardly to be understood without reference to the French text; yet the language on the whole is good, natural and pleasing, and stands above the average prose style of the period, especially when it is considered that that

<sup>1</sup> *Kvæði*, p. 235 (st. 51).

<sup>2</sup> See my *Modern Icelandic* (*Islandica* XII.) 1919, pp. 18-21.—Cf. *Rejse*, index under *Sprog*; *Kvæði*, pp. 124-132.

particular work was in places, at least, difficult to translate. Two years later Eggert published the *Harmataulur* (see p. 50) on his uncle and fosterfather. A look at the title-page immediately shows that here we have to do with something out of the ordinary; all through the orthography is most unusual, and archaic to a degree, and one needs not read long before stumbling over words which are puzzling. In a preface the author deemed it necessary to give his reasons for this departure from the usual way of writing, suspecting, as he says, that his style would be looked upon as an affectation. To imitate the ancient poets, he says, lends dignity and gravity to poetry, and although it is not possible to rise to their high level of poetic art, yet it is worth while making the attempt. Such imitations may often be difficult of understanding to the reader, yet it will repay his efforts to try to get at the meaning. Certain classes of poetry, like hymns, which ought to be easily intelligible to the general public, ought not to be written in that way. As to prose, he considers it preferable to go back to the early written language rather than to use that spoken at the time, because this is apt to be either incorrect or impure, or both. Therefore he uses on purpose antiquated words and phrases which were rarely heard in the spoken language, because he thinks these ought to be revived, when they are good and serviceable. The preservation of the language, as well as the observance of other national customs, he maintains, gives stability to the character of the nation, which otherwise through strong foreign influences would become weak and unsteady. Bad customs he does not wish to perpetuate even though they be national and of old standing, nor does he oppose innovations from outside when they are good.

Eggert never wrote again anything in prose so forced as this pamphlet. He probably realized himself that he had gone too far, and it is not unlikely that Síra Björn who had sound taste for and good knowledge of his mother tongue, as his dictionary shows,<sup>1</sup> may have convinced his brother-in-law that his views and method needed modification. These two remarkable men must have exercised great influence upon one another. The future lexicographer, true to a strict religious upbringing, once protested against the printing of Icelandic sagas by the Hólar press,<sup>2</sup> but while making his dictionary he could not have held

<sup>1</sup> See *Modern Icelandic*, p. 30.

<sup>2</sup> *Skírnir* XC VIII. pp. 116-117.

**N**ocfrar Hvg-hrenstelegar  
**G**arma - **G**av lvr,  
Ester Agætan Mann  
**G**vþm vnn  
**S**igvrdarson,  
Uestan fra Ingialds Hole a Snæfells Nese.  
Er fyrst XII. uisna Flodfr og þvla  
fyre framan.  
Vn fylger  
**G**tr vtt **E**ala,  
vn Mvn Lifs oc Daupa Uisra oc  
Skam- Uisra Mana;  
Enn Sipurst er  
**W**ue Hanns.

SENECA lib. de Provid. Cap. 5.

Ulyrdet eige daupan noctvrs, seger Gvð; hui hannis  
beser eg auhuelldarstan gavrdt allra luta: Þat  
Inngavngv tima beser eg langan gavrdt; enn vðs  
gavngv timan stiðare helldr enn auga verðe afkomu.  
Siaet nu, buast stammt og greidr üegren er til  
ybar frelles!

Prenntad i KUPTMANA-HÖFN  
I því Konunglega Býsí - Huuse, af Gottmann  
Friderich Kiesel, 1755.

TITLE-PAGE OF THE *Harma-taulur*.

the same view as to the old literature, and it is not unlikely that Eggert with his enthusiasm for it brought Síra Björn to the full realization of its importance; on the other hand the latter had possibly some part in the change which Eggert's religious convictions took towards the end of his life. Síra Björn was one of those pastors of the old school who during the reign of Fredrick V gradually extended their interests so as to include natural science and other branches of learning, and who thus form as it were a transition to the clergy of a more rationalistic type.

At the urgings of his friends Eggert next undertook to write a treatise on Icelandic orthography, the original of which seems to have been lost with him, but he had made in 1762 an abstract of it which he sent to his friends, and of which many manuscript copies exist, the one I have had access to being in the British Museum.<sup>1</sup> In an introduction he points out the importance of the subject, in a much clearer way and less affected language than in the *Harmataulur*. Thereupon he gives a list of Icelandic equivalents to the Latin grammatical terms, and these are largely of his own invention, and few, if any, have survived. The pronunciation which he takes as basic for his work is that contemporary one, which he thinks differs least from the old. He gives in alphabetical form the rules for the uses of the various letters, as these may be drawn from ancient manuscripts, later writings, and from the pronunciation of the day, frequently with references to foreign languages, especially Danish. Appended are several chapters dealing with the use of capitals and small letters, division of words, punctuation, abbreviations, the various forms of handwriting, a list of Icelandic solecisms, and a chapter on euphony. And in order to give greater emphasis to the importance of right spelling and correct pronunciation, as well as of pure language in general, which he had pointed out in the introduction, he has added a postscriptum about the stress foreign nations lay upon this by mentioning that some of them have founded special academies for the purpose, such as the French Academy and the *Fruchtbringende Gesellschaft* of Anhalt.

The work is one of the largest on the subject in the language,

<sup>1</sup> The title is: *Stutt aagrip ír Rettritabók Íslendinga hvórs titull er Nockrar bregluglegar reglur, j spurningum framsellar epter ABC um þad hvórnæg rett eige ad tala, bókstafa og skrifa þaa nú lífande íslensku tungu. Fyrsta aavarþ j flyte samanteket aared MDCCClxij.*

does great credit to its author, and exercised considerable influence. It shows his wide reading in and intimate knowledge of the old manuscripts, his familiarity with the spoken language of the day, and on the whole his good judgment. It is unnecessary to point out that it has many faults, such could not be avoided, but these are in a great measure due to the imperfect linguistic science of the day. Eggert was well fitted for writing it, perhaps better than any of his contemporaries. He was a good linguist; he had studied some Greek, was a good Latinist, and well versed in the modern languages. He compiled or made drafts of dictionaries of French, English, and German with Icelandic translations, all of which were lost with him. He also had a reading knowledge of Italian and even of Portuguese, and knew, of course, Danish and Swedish.

## IX.

The news of Eggert's sudden and untimely death caused universal sorrow among his countrymen. Seldom, if ever, has Iceland mourned so deeply any of her sons. A feeling of almost irreparable loss prevailed, and seems even today as fresh as ever in the popular mind. The profound regret is not more strongly expressed by the poets of that age than by poets of more recent dates.<sup>1</sup> Gunnar Pálsson's poem gives utterance to

<sup>1</sup> There is a number of poems on Eggert both by contemporaries and later poets. In Björn Halldórsson's *Æfe*, poems by Gunnar Pálsson, Svinn Sölvason and Pórarinn Jónsson are printed; many have never been printed. One printed separately at the time may be specially mentioned; this is by Ólafur Olavius and has a title as follows: *Drauma diktur um Søknud og sorglegan missir þess Haviaða, Gøfuga og Goda Manns Herra Eggerts Olafssonar Vice-Løgmanns sunnan og austan a Islande a sami Hans dygdum pryddar Konu Frur Ingibiægar Gudmunds Dottur sem ad Guds rade burtkøludz þann 30 May 1768. sinum Astrarinum og Naungum til harms og sorgarauka, enn Føddurlandsins rettsinnudum Elskendum til hugarbøls og krellingar saminn af einum þeirra breyande Vin O. O. Colophon: Prentad i Kaupmannahöfn af Paul Herman Höecke. 1769. 4° ff. (8). There are head- and tail-pieces, both engraved by J. Haas, but possibly drawn by the author of the poem. The tail-piece represents a shield with the initials of the couple, and the inscription: *Mors piis requies*. The head-piece is more elaborate, and is reproduced here. The explanation of it is given in the pamphlet. The picture represents a roaring sea, in the midst of it a capsized boat, to which a man and woman cling by their hands, between which stands: *Mors vita nobis*. To the right is a high promontory, in front of which Minerva is seen, ready to save her devotee, but to her great sorrow is unable to do so. The cock and the owl represent*



HEADPIECE OF OLAVIUS' *Drama dictetur* (1769).



the intense sorrow of a personal friend as well as of the general public, but those of Jónas Hallgrímsson and Matthías Jochumsson show this in no less degree. People had placed such high hopes in Eggert that it seemed inexplicably wanton and cruel that he should be snatched away at so early an age. So far he had been a scholar, student of everything concerning his native land, critic and mentor of the people. Now he was about to enter upon a double career, that of landowner and householder who would put to test his own teachings, and that of a public official. From this fate barred him, and thus perhaps made the memory of him all the brighter. As it was, he had done his life work. He had awakened the people by urging them to love their language, love and believe in their land, have confidence in themselves, use the resources at their disposal, and to look upward and forward, preserving at the same time scrupulously their national heritage. This thought goes through all his works, the exact words in which he expressed it may be forgotten, but the spirit lives on. His work represents a turning point in the history of the people, the scales had moved, and it seemed henceforth certain which course the nation was to follow.

It is, however, not alone this message of his which keeps his memory fresh. A personal element enters also. He had travelled all over the country and met men of all classes, so he probably was known personally to a greater number of people than any of his countrymen at the time. His appearance, his manners, his talk—in one word his personality had impressed itself indelibly upon the popular mind and remained as it were engraved there. Unfortunately we have no portrait of him, but we have a fairly minute description of him by Síra Björn. He was a tall man, handsome of face, strongly built, excelled in all kinds of sport, and added to his wide learning an artistic talent. He was resolute, somewhat grave, yet in daily intercourse cheerful. He was complete master of his emotions in joy and sorrow. In minor matters he might show excitement but in affairs of greater importance he remained calm. He expressed his opinion frankly and generally in slow speech. He was very sensitive as to his dignity and honor, temperate in the different qualities of the goddess. The women to the left bewail the fate of their sister. Out of the cloud emerge two angels with trumpets; one announces: *sum missus ab alto—solvens juncia prius*; the other: *sum missus ab alto—jungens juncta prius*. The poem itself is indifferent.

high degree, most regular in his habits, and generous towards those who were in need. He was kind and helpful to his kinsmen when they deserved it. He loved his native land and never was in agreement with those who hated it or sought to enrich themselves at its expense. He was appreciative of all innovations which he thought might be useful or had proved to be so, and supported those who brought them forward. Popular prejudices and errors he tried to eradicate. All his life he kept aloof from quarrels among men, only interfering when he saw the possibility of settling them or bringing about reconciliation. This indeed is an engaging picture, and probably in no way over-drawn. And it is this which has been handed down from one generation to another. It shows him as the attractive, eager, and high-minded champion of his country, for ever young, because —to use the words of an Icelandic poet about another man who suffered a similar end—no one saw him old.

## APPENDIX.

### I.

1. **ATLI HUNDÓLFSSON** the Slim (earl of Gaular in Sogn, Norway, killed in the battle in Stafanesvágr, Fjalir, ca. 900).
2. **HÁSTEINN** (*al.* Hallsteinn) **ATLASON** (settled at Stokkseyri, Iceland, *d.* ca. 917), *m.* Póra Ölvisdóttir.
3. **ATLI HÁSTEINSSON** (of Traðarholt, *d.* 926).
4. **PÓRÐUR ATLASON** the Torpid (lost at sea 939), *m.* Pórunn, daughter of Ásgeir Austmannaskelmir.
5. **PORGILS PÓRÐARSON ORRABEINSSTJÚPUR** (*b.* 937, *d.* 1022; was in Greenland 986-92; cf. the *Flóamanna saga*), *m.* Helga, daughter of Póroddur Eyvindsson góði of Hjalli.
6. **GRÍMUR PORGILSSON**, called Glamaður.
7. **INGJALDUR GRÍMSSON**.
8. **GRÍMUR INGJALDSSON**.
9. **EINAR GRÍMSSON** (of Kaldaðarnes).
10. **HALLEKATLA EINARSDÓTTIR**, *m.* Hrafn Sveinbjarnarson (*b.* ca. 1170, *d.* March 4, 1213. Cf. his saga, *Islandica* I. pp. 52-53).
11. **HERÐÍS HRAFNSDÓTTIR**, *m.* Sigmundur Gunnarsson (who took part in the battle of Húnafjöldi, 1235).
12. **SVEINBJÖRN SIGMUNDSSON** (of Súðavík, *d.* ca. 1290).
13. **EIRÍKUR SVEINBJARNARSON**, Knight (*d.* 1340 or 1342; governor of Iceland 1323), *m.* Vilborg, daughter of Einar Porvaldsson of Vatnsfjord.
14. **EINAR EIRÍKSSON**, Knight (of Vatnsfjord; *d.* ca. 1381), *m.* Helga of Grund in Eyjafjord (probably Pórðardóttir).
15. **BJÖRN EINARSSON** Jórsalafari (the Crusader; *b.* ca. 1350, *d.* 1415), *m.* Solveig, daughter of Þorsteinn Eyjólfsson, the lawman.
16. **KRÍSTÍN BJÖRNSDÓTTIR** (*d.* 1459), *m.* Þorleifur Árnason (a descendant of Ólafur pá, cf. *Laxdæla saga*; *d.* 1432).
17. **BJÖRN PORLEIFSSON** the Wealthy, Knight (*b.* ca. 1408, *d.* 1477; governor of Iceland from 1457), *m.* Ólöf, daughter of Loptur Guttormsson the Wealthy of Möðruvellir.
18. **PÓRA BJÖRNSDÓTTIR** (illegitimate daughter, her mother unknown), *m.* Guðni Jónsson (prefect of Dalasýsla, etc., *d.* 1508).
19. **BJÖRN GUÐNASON** (of Ógur, *d.* 1518), *m.* Ragnhildur Bjarnadóttir.
20. **GUÐRÚN BJÖRNSDÓTTIR** the elder (*b.* 1489, *d.* 1563), *m.* Hannes Eggertsson, Knight (*d.* ca. 1533; governor of Iceland).
21. **BJÖRN HANNESSON** (*d.* 1554; prefect of Barðastrandarsýsla), *m.* Pórunn, daughter of Daði Guðmundsson of Snóksdal.
22. **HALLBJÖRG BJÖRNSDÓTTIR**, *m.* Þorleifur Jónsson (of Múli, Skálmarnes).
23. **EINAR PORLEIFSSON** (of Múli), *m.* Guðrún, daughter of Þorlákur Einarsson (prefect of Ísafjarðarsýsla, *d.* 1596; brother of Bishop Gízur).
24. **PÓRÓLFUR EINARSSON** (*d.* 1649), *m.* Porkatla Finnsdóttir of Flatey.

25. INGIBJÖRG PÓRÓLFSÐÓTTIR (*d.* 1706), *m.* Nikulás Guðmundsson (minister of Flatey parishes, *d.* 1708).
26. GUÐRÚN NIKULÁSDÓTTIR (*d.* 1731), *m.* Sigurður Sigurðsson (*d.* 1744, of the Svalbarð family).
27. RAGNHILDUR SIGURÐSDÓTTIR (*d.* 1768), *m.* Ólafur Gunnlaugsson (*d.* 1784).
28. EGGERT ÓLAFSSON (1726-68).

## II. The Svalbarð Family.

There is a tradition that this can be traced back to Egill Skallagrímsson (*d.* ca. 983) thus:<sup>1</sup> 1. Þorsteinn Egilsson. 2. Helga the Fair Þorsteinsdóttir (the heroine of the *Gunnlaugs saga ormstungu*), *m.* Porkell Hallkelsson. 3. Haukur Porkelsson. 4. Höskuldur Hauksson. 5. Steinn Höskuldsson. 6. Vermundur Steinsson. 7. Loðinn Vermundsson. 8. Vermundur kögur Loðinsson. 9. Guðbjartur Vermundsson. 10. Ásgrímur Guðbjartsson, priest of Bægisá.

11. GUÐBJARTUR ÁSCRÍMSSON, called Flóki, priest of Laufás and officialis of Hólar see.
12. PORKELL GUÐBJARTSSON (*d.* after 1483), priest of Laufás and officialis of Hólar.
13. MAGNÚS PORKELSSON (*d.* after 1534; of Skriða í Reykjadal), *m.* Kristín, daughter of Eyjólfur Arnfinnsson, Knight.
14. JÓN MAGNÚSSON, of Svalbarð (*d.* after 1564), *m.* Ragnheiður Pétursdóttir "in the red stockings" (*d.* before 1547).
15. SIGURÐUR JÓNSSON, of Reynistað (*d.* 1602), *m.* Guðný Jónsdóttir of Akrar.
16. JÓN SIGURÐSSON, lawman (*b.* 1565, *d.* 1635), *m.* Þorbjörg Magnúsdóttir.
17. SIGURÐUR JÓNSSON, "lögrettumaður" of Svalbarð, *m.* Katrín, daughter of Síra Jón Magnússon of Laufás (*d.* 1675).
18. SIGURÐUR SIGURÐSSON, *m.* Guðrún Nikulásdóttir (see above).
19. RAGNHILDUR SIGURÐSDÓTTIR, *m.* Ólafur Gunnlaugsson.
20. EGGERT ÓLAFSSON.

<sup>1</sup> See Bogi Benediktsson, *Sýslumannaafir* I. pp. 7-8; Jón Pétursson, *Tímarit* IV. p. 29; Jón Porkelsson, *Saga Magnúsar prúða*, 1895, p. 3ff.











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